

## Current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce: Support document

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# Contents

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Tables and figures	3
Literature review	4
Introduction	4
Who is included in Australia's language, literacy and numeracy workforce?	5
How do changes in the broader vocational education and training landscape relate to the current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce?	7
What is known about the skills base of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce?	9
What professional development opportunities are language, literacy and numeracy teachers, trainers and tutors currently accessing?	13
What do providers and practitioners perceive to be the key professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce and what barriers exist to meeting these needs?	17
What existing good practice models can be drawn upon to inform future planning and delivery of professional development to the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce?	21
References	24
Electronic survey findings	26
Introduction	26
Survey methodology	26
Findings	28
Summary of survey findings	40
Providers of professional development	42
Semi-structured telephone interview findings	44
Introduction	44
Telephone interview methodology	44
Findings	45
Summary	52
Sector-specific teleconference findings	54
Introduction	54
Teleconference methodology	54
Findings	55
Program Managers' survey	62
Teachers' survey	65
Semi-structured telephone interviews	74
Teleconference Questions	76

# Tables

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Table 1: Surveys analysed by state and sector	27
Table 2: Geographical region: language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers	28
Table 3: Employing organisations: language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers	28
Table 4: Years of experience: language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers	29
Table 5: Language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers' most important current professional development needs	31
Table 6: Language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers' key future teaching-related professional development needs	31
Table 7: Language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers' key future non-teaching professional development needs	32
Table 8: Geographical region: vocational trainers	32
Table 9: Employing organisations: vocational trainers	33
Table 10: Comparison of current work role most requiring professional development	34
Table 11: Vocational trainers' most important current professional development needs	34
Table 12: Vocational trainers' key future teaching professional development needs	35
Table 13: Vocational trainers' key future non-teaching professional development needs	35
Table 14: Employing organisations: volunteer tutors	36
Table 15: Volunteer tutors' key future teaching professional development needs	38
Table 16: Volunteer tutors' key future non-teaching professional development needs	38
Table 17: Employing organisations: program managers	39
Table 18: Highest number of professional development hours	40
Table 19: Semi-structured telephone interview participants by state and sector	44
Table 20: Sector-specific teleconference participants by state	54

# Literature review

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## Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to contextualise current language, literacy and numeracy delivery in Australia, in order to provide a framework for consideration of the current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce. The information derived from this literature review informs the direction and content of the data collection instruments used in the research project *Current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce*, which this review supports.

As McKenna and Fitzpatrick suggest, the integration of literacy with vocational skills training in the Australian training model poses particular challenges for the teaching workforce, as it means that both specialist adult literacy teaching skills and vocational training skills are required by the VET workforce (2004, p.7).

A complex intersection of geographic, sectoral, site and individual variables is revealed when this language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce is disaggregated into workplaces with particular organisational cultures and norms and into individuals with their varying ideologies and career trajectories.

For the purposes of this literature review the term 'language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce' is taken to include managers, teachers, trainers, volunteer tutors and other practitioners. These workers encompass both language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers and vocational teachers/trainers who are incorporating language, literacy and numeracy into their delivery of Training Packages. The discussion in this review will encompass the Adult and Community Education and not for profit sectors as well as the VET sector. In framing the literature search for this review the following questions were formulated:

- ✧ Who is included in Australia's language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce?
- ✧ How do changes in the broader vocational education and training landscape relate to the current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce?
- ✧ What is known about the skills base of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce?
- ✧ What professional development opportunities are language, literacy and numeracy teachers, trainers and tutors currently accessing?
- ✧ What do providers and practitioners perceive to be the key professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce and what barriers exist to meeting these needs?
- ✧ What existing good practice models can be drawn upon to inform future planning and delivery of professional development to the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce?

## Who is included in Australia's language, literacy and numeracy workforce?

This literature review does not attempt to provide a comprehensive profile of language, literacy and numeracy workers in Australia, as the focus of the review is on the current and future professional development needs of this group of knowledge workers. However, it is impossible to adequately explore these professional development needs without locating these workers to some degree in the broader social and pedagogic framework in which they operate.

The first section of this literature review consequently presents a brief discussion of the demographics of this language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce.

The major employers of adult language, literacy and numeracy teachers and trainers are TAFE, the Adult Migrant English Service, and Adult and Community Education. All three of these organisations deliver specialist English language courses as well as specialist literacy and numeracy courses. As well, all three of these organisations engage language, literacy and numeracy volunteers. The major volunteer organisations offering language, literacy and numeracy tuition are the Smith Family and Mission Australia.

Accurate statistics on the size of the specialist language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce in Australia are not available, but the number of adults undertaking language, literacy and numeracy courses can be expected to remain high. NCVER data indicates, for example, that in 2001 approximately 9% of all VET students were enrolled in either an English language course or a literacy and numeracy course (ANTA 2003, p.9). Further factors, such as the results of the Survey of Adult Literacy indicating that 45% of the adult Australian population do not have adequate language or literacy or numeracy skills to cope with their everyday life and work (ANTA 2003, p.1), and the inextricable relationship between language, literacy and numeracy skills and generic life and employability skills (Kearns 2001), underscore the importance of research and reflection on the professional capacity of this sector of the adult education workforce.

One of the strongest messages to emerge from the literature canvassed is that Australian language, literacy and numeracy educators cannot be regarded as a homogenous group. Some of the differences relate to the context or sector in which these educators work, some relate to the language, literacy and numeracy educators as individuals with varying educational and employment histories, and still others relate to the role differentiation that has emerged with the national training reforms of the last decade. A genuine appreciation of this diversity will be critical to establishing the current and future professional development needs of these workers.

A number of studies including the recent NCVER publication *Profiling the national vocational education and training workforce* (NCVER 2005) remark on the lack of reliable centrally collected quantitative data on the VET and Adult and Community Education workforces.

The most comprehensive recent snapshot of literacy and numeracy specialists in Australia is that provided in the TAFE NSW Access Division project, *Adult literacy and numeracy practices 2001: a national snapshot* (McGuirk 2001). This research covers workers from TAFE, Adult and Community Education and not for profit sectors. The sample of language, literacy and numeracy workers (n=642) reported on by their managers portrays a workforce that is largely casual or sessional (70%), female dominated (85% female), ageing (50% of the total workforce between 40 and 50 and with only two per cent of language, literacy and numeracy educators under 30).

It seems reasonable to assume that the profile of vocational trainers who are incorporating language, literacy and numeracy strategies into their Training Package delivery may accord with the profile of VET teachers overall. Data on this group are provided by the human resources and teachers' surveys conducted by Harris et al. (2001) as part of their comprehensive study, *The*

*changing role of staff development for teachers and trainers in vocational education and training.* Of the 11 084 teachers and trainers reported on by the respondents, 51.5% were male and 48.5% were female and more males than females held permanent positions. Only 40% of VET teachers/trainers were permanent staff. Seventy five per cent of teachers were between 35 and 54, and only 13% under 30 (Harris et al. 2001, p.99). Harris et al. considered this age distribution to be unremarkable given that VET teaching/training was most often a second career, as teachers/trainers come to VET with their discipline knowledge after having established themselves in their industry area. Dickie et al. (2004, p.59) state that whilst the VET practitioners were no older than the population overall, TAFE practitioners are older and that the issue of the ageing VET workforce is very much located in TAFE with three out of five permanent TAFE teachers being 45 or older.

Language, literacy and numeracy teachers and tutors are delivering in a range of modes, but it appears that the great majority of language, literacy and numeracy delivery still occurs face-to-face. Technology is being used more and more as a tool, but it has not replaced face-to-face teaching. (McGuirk 2001, p.24). This is not to underestimate the challenges posed to language, literacy and numeracy educators by the new teaching and learning technologies.

The size and working conditions of the community sector workforce are even less well-documented than the public and private VET workforce. The picture is further complicated by the differing systems and structures operating within the Adult and Community Education sector from state to state. However, the amount of Adult and Community Education and not for profit provision is without question considerable. In Australia in 2000, for example, between 1.1 and 1.3 million people took part in Adult and Community Education learning. (NCVER 2001 cited in Harris and Simons 2003, p.5). Golding et al. (2001, p.8) report that at the time of their research review over 950 Adult and Community Education providers were submitting data on participation to national data collection. As not all Adult and Community Education providers submitted data, the actual number of providers at this time would have been well in excess of 950.

The strong contribution of community providers and volunteer tutors to adult language, literacy and numeracy provision in Australia is by no means unique, with McKenna and Fitzpatrick finding that most OECD countries rely heavily on community and volunteer provision (2004, p.25). In Australia, the Adult Migrant Education Program alone has approximately 3000 volunteer tutors.

In fact, it seems that given the strength of its contribution to the adult language, literacy and numeracy field, community provision remains somewhat 'under-conceptualised, under-researched and under-theorised and possibly insufficiently appreciated in the current policy context' (Hannon et al. 2003, p.5).

There is a clear message in the existing literature that this is an under-funded sector (Harris and Simons 2003, Sanguinetti et al. 2004, Golding et al. 2001). Sanguinetti et al. (2004) suggest that the lack of funding in the Adult and Community Education sector and the consequent poorer terms and conditions of the workers are so constitutive of the culture of the sector that they are simultaneously an inequity needing addressing and a badge of identity for Adult and Community Education workers. Sanguinetti et al. go on to propose that 'in this sense, the "fire in the belly" translates into participating in something special and worth doing for its own sake' (Sanguinetti et al. 2004, p.51).

For the many thousands of volunteers who work in the adult literacy field through government and not for profit providers, such as TAFE, the NSW Adult Migrant English Service, The Smith Family and Mission Australia, it is all about 'fire in the belly,' or at the very least about an ideological commitment to literacy as a fundamental human right (Giumelli 2001, Searle 2001).

Joan Giumelli (2001, p.3) argues that volunteers are marginalised within adult basic education, but questions whether the continuation of the freedom of choice that is so valued by those delivering informal and non-accredited language, literacy and numeracy training can only be maintained with such marginalisation.

McKenna and Fitzpatrick see the marginal standing of adult literacy provision in relation to vocational education impacting on the workforce adversely, in that:

the community-focused and volunteer-based nature of adult literacy education in most countries results in a workforce that is undertrained, underpaid or not paid at all, unstable and variable in numbers and quality. (McKenna and Fitzpatrick 2004, p.25)

A number of studies also remark on the existence of a significant group of 'portfolio workers'. These are practitioners who work simultaneously for more than one provider (Dickie et al. 2004, Harris et al. 2001, McGuirk 2001, Chappell and Johnston 2003). For example, twenty per cent of the 686 VET teachers and trainers surveyed by Harris et al. were portfolio workers (2001, p.11). More research will be needed on this emerging group within the language, literacy and numeracy workforce. This mode of employment may further complicate access to relevant professional development.

## How do changes in the broader vocational education and training landscape relate to the current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce?

The rapid and extensive changes in the educational context in Australia and overseas over the last two decades have resulted in significant alterations in the roles and responsibilities of all teachers/trainers of adults, and there have been many articles and much research on the impact of these changes to the vocational and education training and community sectors and systems internationally and nationally.

In Australia the discourse has traversed the emphasis on accredited training accompanying the move towards competency based training that occurred with the introduction of Training Packages, the development of the Australian Quality Training Framework, the trend towards an industry-led agenda especially for the VET sector, the focus on outcomes and assessment, the delivery of training tailored to the needs and contexts of learners, the need for training to be delivered in flexible and cost-effective modes, the requirement for compliance with reporting and assessment frameworks, and more recently the importance of employability skills. Such issues and the resulting need to enhance the capacity of knowledge workers to manage these changes have been widely canvassed in the literature. (See for example McKenna and Fitzpatrick 2004, Chappell and Johnston 2003, Rumsey 2002, Harris et al. 2001, Dickie et al. 2004, Schofield and McDonald 2004, Victorian TAFE Association 2001, Wilson 2003, Henry 2004.)

There seems to be no indication that the pace of change will slow. In fact, as Schofield and McDonald point out, the pace of change in the coming decade is likely to accelerate. They suggest that:

the challenge of aligning skill outcomes to the changing world of work, new industry and labour market dynamics, and different social circumstances is now far greater than when Australia first embarked on the path of training reform. (Schofield and McDonald 2004, p.8)

Less has been written on the implications of workplace and sectoral change for paid and volunteer community practitioners than on the implications for VET practitioners, but there is general acknowledgment that practitioners now 'require an extensive range of capabilities and an increasingly sophisticated mix of generic, professional and leadership skills' (Dickie et al. 2004, p.4).

There is also a strong sense across sectors of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce that the need for compliance with regulatory, auditing and funding bodies has greatly increased the administrative load of teachers, trainers and managers (Waterhouse et al. 2001).

The differing contexts in which language, literacy and numeracy teachers and tutors operate will influence the degree and nature of the effect of change on practice, roles and responsibilities, but all language, literacy and numeracy workers are now located in this new environment and affected to greater or lesser degrees. Chappell and Johnston's thematic analysis of data from 28 VET practitioners revealed five major themes in the 'talk' of these practitioners. These themes were talk of change, commercialisation, increased administrative work, challenges to educational identity and industry identity (2003, p.4).

Language, literacy and numeracy specialists in both VET and Adult and Community Education have been affected by funding constraints and the tendering and reporting demands of attracting external funding, the casualisation of the workforce, the requirement for teachers to be qualified to deliver accredited training, and increased competition deriving from the proliferation of providers. A simple practical example is the need for compliance in externally funded programs such as the Language Literacy and Numeracy Programme. Such programs have led to a far greater focus on the reporting, validation and moderation of assessments. This has meant that staff in registered training organisations delivering the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme have needed to become proficient in the use of detailed technical tools like the National Reporting System (Perkins 2005).

Vocational teachers in particular have needed to come to grips with the complexities of competency based training and delivering through Training Packages (Harris et al. 2001, Dickie et al. 2004, Chappell and Johnston 2003).

Volunteers, too, need to meet requirements for teaching on accredited courses and now need to make greater training commitments before being accepted as volunteers. Searle, in her article *Volunteers in adult literacy provision*, says that for volunteers working on accredited courses 'from a previous commitment to a short training course, now a minimum of 100 hours training was required over a twelve month period' (Searle 2001).

There are further difficulties for Adult and Community Education providers in the increased emphasis on delivery of accredited VET programs, when many Adult and Community Education teachers are volunteers. Not the least of these may be the conflict with the more diffuse cultural or personal goals of lifelong learning and the pedagogical values of learner-centred education held by many workers in this sector (Golding et al. 2001, p.12).

Across sectors the move towards a business and service orientation and away from the more traditional educational focus has resulted in something of a challenge to the professional identities of teaching/training practitioners (OTFE 1998, cited in Harris et al. 2001). Emphasis on competition, economic efficiency and entrepreneurialism means that practitioners feel they are now being required to function as much as business people as educators (Victorian TAFE Association 2001, p.12). This has great significance in a study of professional development needs as some practitioners are, as Chappell and Johnston express it, being asked to change their identity at work. Practitioners now need:

to have different understandings of their role in education and training, to have different relationships with learners, to conceptualise their professional and vocational knowledge differently, to alter their relationship with their organisation,



to change their understanding of who they are in the new education and training landscape. (Chappell and Johnston 2003, p.8)

Chappell and Johnston talk of competing discourses within VET. These are the discourse of public good and the discourse of business. Their research suggests that VET practitioners working for private providers found less dissonance with the discourse of business than those practitioners working for public providers (Chappell and Johnston 2003, p.5).

Most language, literacy and numeracy teachers and tutors appear to remain attached to the discourse of public good. The outcome of the increasing reach of the discourse of business has been a sense of ideological dissonance, particularly for those who have been in the profession for a number of decades. Many older language, literacy and numeracy workers across sectors were motivated to enter the profession by a social justice agenda, and language, literacy and numeracy workers in TAFE, Adult and Community Education and not for profit sites remain strongly influenced by humanistic discourses and empowerment philosophies (McGuirk 2001, Searle 1999, Sanguinetti et al. 2004).

The ideologies underpinning the pedagogical practice of VET language, literacy and numeracy specialists are perhaps then more aligned with the holistic philosophies of the community sector than with those of their vocational VET colleagues. As McKenna and Fitzpatrick see it:

Many practitioners are critical of the perceived vocational orientation of programs and are antagonistic to competency-based systems per se, perceiving them to be not 'learner centred'. There are pronounced ideological tensions among practitioners (Shore 2003) and between practitioners and policy. (McKenna and Fitzpatrick 2004, p.15)

A related source of ideological tension between practitioners and providers may be the pressure on a growing number of practitioners to place a greater emphasis on responding to the reporting requirements of a program than on the process of teaching and learning (Waterhouse 2001, McGuirk 2001). The tension can sometimes be interpreted as one that pits accountability against educational values.

## What is known about the skills base of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce?

Language, literacy and numeracy teaching and training are social and situated practices and the requirements for doing the job well will depend on where one is located. The increasing role differentiation which is a feature of the emerging training landscape (Harris 2001) may suggest that even in one workplace different language, literacy and numeracy workers will need different knowledge and skills to do their job well. The new and significantly different roles that practitioners are performing appear to be evidenced across different sites and sectors (Chappell and Johnston 2003, p.5).

Nevertheless, there are commonalities in desirable attributes and skills that can be articulated across sectors and locations. Much of the available literature on such skills is not specific to language, literacy and numeracy, but language, literacy and numeracy teachers and tutors are knowledge workers 'working and learning in the knowledge era' (Henry 2004, p.3) and require many of the same skills and attributes as the broader adult education and training workforce.

The new Training and Assessment Training Package will in part entail such an iteration of what constitutes professional competence with particular reference to competence in integrating language, literacy and numeracy in Training Package delivery.

A number of attempts have been made to develop detailed skills profiles for VET teachers (Rumsey 2002, Harris et al. 2001, Corben and Thomson 2001, Lepani 1995). Harris et al. (2001, p.15) used a Delphi technique survey of 56 key stakeholders to identify: the challenges to be faced by VET teachers and trainers in the coming years, the expertise currently needed by teachers and trainers, and the attributes required to meet the challenges of coming years. The desired attributes were ranked in order of importance as: professionalism, flexibility/adaptability, the ability to accept/cope with/predict change, tolerance/sensitivity to student needs, customer focus and passion for teaching.

In research on shaping the VET professional of the future, Rumsey collated the skill areas needed by VET practitioners and produced a draft matrix of required skills and related knowledge. The broad headings of instruction and assessment skills, personal skills, student support skills, technology skills and management skills are broken down into detailed lists of approximately 60 skill areas.

Although not specific to language, literacy and numeracy teaching, the great majority of the skills identified express the components of what language, literacy and numeracy teachers and tutors need to know to do their job well. This comprehensive matrix makes transparent the complexity and range of skills needed by practitioners and provides a potential framework for reflection on developing the language, literacy and numeracy workforce capacity.

Rumsey remarks that for each of the skill areas identified also 'there is a body of required complementary procedural propositional, strategic and dispositional knowledge that underpins it,' and goes on to say that the subset of personal skills are 'critically important skills for dealing with ongoing change, conducting and participating in flexible delivery learning programs, and undertaking self-directed professional development' (2002, p.43).

In expressing the core requirements for their volunteer tutors, The Smith Family clearly foregrounds such personal attributes. The Smith Family website states that no prior teaching experience is necessary, only the completion of a nationally recognised training course provided by The Smith Family and the possession of the two attributes of patience and understanding (Smith Family 2005).

This requirement for patience and understanding is not a trivial one. Sanguinetti et al., writing on the qualities of Adult and Community Education teachers, say that the patience that teachers display in adult literacy is something that should be acknowledged and appreciated as one of the characteristics of Adult and Community Education pedagogy, as Adult and Community Education and other community teachers are most often working with students who have faced multiple barriers to accessing education and have often had negative past learning experiences (Sanguinetti et al. 2004, p.37). Most language, literacy and numeracy specialists in both public and private VET sites would likely argue that the majority of their students have also been disadvantaged and require similar patience and understanding.

Other qualities that Sanguinetti et al. identify as indicative of a quality Adult and Community Education teacher include being personally engaged in their teaching; reflective about his/her practice and the wider context; able to improvise and take risks; aware of power dimensions in their teaching; and patient and trusting in the learning process (2004, p.30).

The qualifications and diversity of teaching experience of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce appear to reflect the varied pathways that have led to the profession and are somewhat subject to generational change. There continues to be intense debate about what constitute appropriate entry qualifications for both the adult literacy and the broader VET and Adult and Community Education fields. Some writers argue for increasing the professionalism of the field by adopting or upholding minimum entry standards, while others advocate a more situational and needs-based approach to what constitutes professional competence (McKenna

and Fitzpatrick 2004, Victorian TAFE Association 2001, Shore and Zannettino 2002, Dickie et al. 2004, Foley and Thompson 2003, Giumelli 2001).

In this literature review entry qualifications are not discussed in detail, but some general comments are made to again highlight the diverse backgrounds of language, literacy and numeracy teachers and tutors. If there are non-standard or changing entry requirements for the field, then this is likely to be of relevance in determining current and future professional development needs.

The available data on the existing skills base of practitioners are fragmented and inconsistent and researchers still lack a quantitative picture of the extent of current skills gaps and developmental needs on the basis of role, employment mode, industry sector and registered training organisation sector (Dickie et al. 2004, p.26). The more systematic collection of national data is a priority for effective workforce planning and the addressing of skills gaps (NCVER 2004, p.10).

Dickie et al. (2004) report that available quantitative data sources indicate that more than two out of three VET professionals have post school qualifications, but that most VET practitioners do not have qualifications specifically in education and training. One in three TAFE practitioners surveyed held such a qualification, but outside TAFE only one in 10 held qualifications specific to education and training. Differences in qualifications were also evidenced in relation to employment mode, with permanent teachers being more likely to hold educational qualifications than other categories.

Those language, literacy and numeracy teachers whose primary focus is the delivery of vocational training are most likely to enter the profession with qualifications relating to their vocational area and only gain educational qualifications subsequent to their entry to the profession. Harris et al. (2001) found that this was less the case in private registered training organisations, as these providers preferred teachers and trainers to have educational qualifications before commencing employment. The significance of this for language, literacy and numeracy provision is that some vocational teachers/trainers may be placed in the position of delivering training with integrated language, literacy and numeracy having neither specialist language, literacy and numeracy nor generalist teaching qualifications.

In McGuirk's (2001) study a large number of the 642 language, literacy and numeracy teachers reported on by program managers had post-graduate qualifications in adult literacy and numeracy, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages or adult education (n=275), and a significant number had the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment (n=181). These groups were not mutually exclusive with some holding both qualifications (number not given). As McGuirk points out, all staff working in the delivery of Training Packages in registered training organisations are required to have the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment, so the high number with this qualification was not an unexpected result. Similarly, the high number of language, literacy and numeracy specialists with discipline-specific qualifications is to be expected. Language, literacy and numeracy specialists are required to have a teaching qualification and post-graduate qualifications relating to language, literacy and numeracy to be employed by public providers like the Adult Migrant English Service and TAFE. Those Adult and Community Education teachers delivering accredited courses such as the Certificates in Spoken and Written English would also need to meet such requirements.

For vocational teachers working for public and private providers, the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment is becoming the most commonly required qualification as almost all vocational teachers are involved in Training Package delivery.

Whilst language, literacy and numeracy competencies will be included in the revised certificate IV qualification, Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, there are clearly significant concerns about the move away from university undergraduate and post-graduate sector programs and as to how well the Certificate IV qualification or the proposed Diploma will equip language, literacy

and numeracy workers with the required skills to deliver to their students. Foley and Thompson, writing in *Literacy Link*, complain that the centre has shifted from university sector professional development programs which ‘until a short while ago were the accepted norm for transitioning into the field’ (2003, p.12).

This issue of the underlying pedagogic skill base of practitioners is of particular importance, as in much of the broader VET literature discipline knowledge tends to be assumed and is little discussed. This is perhaps not surprising given that most vocational trainers come to the VET sector with an existing body of industry knowledge, if perhaps without teaching qualifications (NCVER 2004, Dickie et al. 2004, Harris et al. 2001). The question of how the pedagogic skills and subject knowledge of language, literacy and numeracy workers can be measured and enhanced should not be lost in the consideration of the diversification of roles and new expectations placed on teaching practitioners. This is particularly relevant in view of the ongoing and intense nature of the debate both in research communities and the popular media on how language, literacy and numeracy skills can, are, and should be learned and taught. It is also of obvious significance to language, literacy and numeracy workforce development planning.

It may be worth remembering that language, literacy and numeracy teachers and trainers will continue to need professional development which is, as one of the respondents in McGuirk’s study puts it, ‘to do with teaching, and not just reporting to the government for funding’ (2001, p.73).

Formal qualifications are not only completed as entry qualifications. In view of the importance of instructional and content skills and the more diverse skill demands being placed on practitioners, the currency and course content of these qualifications are also significant. In McGuirk’s study most of the post-graduate Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and post-graduate Adult Literacy and Basic Education qualifications held by language, literacy and numeracy teachers were gained in the 1990s. Since 2000, however, fewer teachers had undertaken university post-graduate programs and only enrolments in Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment continued to grow (2001, p.20). This may, of course, only indicate that in a finite field with an ageing workforce those teachers who wish to undertake post-graduate study have already done so, and that the major uptake of the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment occurred in the decade between 1995 and 2005. Nevertheless, this pattern accords with other discussions of the declining enrolments and availability of Adult Literacy and Basic Education and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages postgraduate courses being offered by universities (Foley and Thompson 2003, McKenna and Fitzpatrick 2004).

One third of the 686 VET teachers/trainers surveyed by Harris were undertaking formal qualifications at the time of the survey. Despite this high rate of formal study the key stakeholders interviewed by Harris believed that only half the current teaching workforce possessed the skills they would need to face the challenges of the coming five to seven years. The key challenges to VET practitioners identified by these key stakeholders were operating in a competitive market, keeping up with changes in VET, flexible delivery, understanding and working with Training Packages and using technology (2001, p.vii).

Areas identified as skills gaps for VET practitioners by Rumsey’s 2002 research include techniques for flexible delivery; managing online learning; competency based and criterion referenced assessment; inclusive practice; time management; dealing with ongoing change; knowledge and information management; partnership; contract and collaborative work; use of information and communications technology for presentation; information on major VET developments; knowledge of the Australian Quality Training Framework to ensure compliance with relevant regulatory standards and up to date knowledge of industry issues.

Gaining access to the new teaching and learning technologies for themselves and their students and developing the required computer literacies to use the technologies are issues that will

continue to require serious attention (Rumsey 2002, Leu 2003). As Golding et al. (2001, p.12) point out, the new technologies are creating demands on staff, on prevailing pedagogical values, and even on how sectors are organised. Snyder et al. go further, arguing that literacy and information communication technology can no longer be regarded as separate activities. Contemporary communication is mediated by information technology and so digital literacies need to be integrated into adult literacy education. This will necessarily have significant professional development implications for adult literacy educators (Snyder et al. 2005).

For language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers with little experience of delivery in the workplace, there is another important skill set that may need addressing. There are particular pedagogies of workplace that need to be understood before moving into such contexts (Wyse and Brewer 2001, Trenerry 2002). Wyse and Brewer argue that the initial qualifications of workplace assessors cannot be taken as a guarantee that assessors will be able to make valid and reliable judgements, and recommend that assessors be provided with more opportunities to share information and update their skills and industry knowledge (2001, p.32).

It seems it will be difficult to thoroughly analyse the skills and skills gaps of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce without stated and commonly accepted competencies that language, literacy and numeracy practitioners as adult educators should possess (Kutner and Tibbetts 1997). It also seems that in a diverse and constantly changing working environment compiling a definitive list of desirable skills is no easy task.

## What professional development opportunities are language, literacy and numeracy teachers, trainers and tutors currently accessing?

Quantitative data and published qualitative data on the professional development currently being undertaken by language, literacy and numeracy educators remain scant.

A number of authors reflect that professional development opportunities have always been limited in the community sector and appear to be declining in the VET sector (McKenna and Fitzpatrick 2004, Wilson and Corbett 2001, Harris et al. 2001, Castleton and McDonald 2002). Foley and Thompson complain that professional development opportunities for language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers were 'severely eroded with the passing of the National Staff Development Committee, [Adult Literacy and Basic Education] modules and the limited offering of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy teaching courses' (2003, p.13).

Access to both formal and informal professional development is also influenced by employment status with part-time, casual and contract staff facing more barriers to obtaining employer funded professional development (Harris et al. 2001, Dickie et al. 2004). This is of particular concern given that the majority of language, literacy and numeracy workers are not permanent employees.

This is not to suggest that good professional development opportunities are not being offered to language, literacy and numeracy educators throughout Australia. There are many innovative and comprehensive programs being offered at national, state and local provider levels. Only a few of these programs or projects are mentioned in this literature review as examples, but identification and discussion of good practice initiatives in professional development form part of the research associated with this literature review.

The Adult Migrant English Program professional development website, *Professional Connections*, provides a good example of a coordinated national approach to professional development. As part of their contractual obligations, providers who successfully tender for Adult Migrant English Program provision must undertake to provide relevant professional development for their personnel. The *Professional Connections* website evidences a comprehensive range of professional

development opportunities available to program staff. The site includes a calendar of a variety of professional development events, workshops, conferences national forums and discussion lists. The site also contains useful resources, such as a bank of assessment tasks, links to professional reading, an e-bulletin facility and much more. The courses promoted on the site are offered in different states and are on diverse topics such as 'Culture, content and language teaching' and 'Meeting youth settlement needs in the AMEP' (Adult Migrant English Program Research Centre 2005).

As an example of comprehensive professional developments at the state level, TAFE providers throughout Australia have invested considerable effort and funds into the professional development of language, literacy and numeracy practitioners. This has been achieved using a combination of centralised, institute, college and section level professional development initiatives in a range of delivery modes to address both local and system-wide needs.

Foley and Thompson are, however, concerned that professional development has come to mean 'all things to all people and indeed must cover a broad spectrum of developmental needs from the raw beginner to the most experienced Adult Literacy and Basic Education teacher' (2003, p.12). They provide a comprehensive list of what in their view professional development now encompasses for teachers and managers. They list pre-service teacher qualifications in adult education, post-graduate VET qualifications and training, university recognised qualifications in adult literacy and numeracy, assessment and training in the VET sector, curriculum development and moderation, keeping abreast of changes to clientele, working with diverse learners, the dissemination of new teaching and learning methodologies and strategies, personal survival techniques, upskilling in new funding and reporting mechanisms, familiarisation with the Australian Qualifications and Training Framework policies and procedures, registered training organisation strategic and business planning, human resource changes, enterprise teaching agreements and new technologies and software.

Harris et al. (2001, p.35) inquired about structured education and training activities undertaken by respondents in the previous year. These may differ from those undertaken by Adult and Community Education and language, literacy and numeracy specialists but provide an interesting benchmark against which data collected in this research project on the professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce can be calibrated. The two most common types of activity were in the areas of Training Packages (44% of sample) and computing (39% of sample). While these were the most frequently attended activities, this did not correlate directly with the highest mean number of hours spent on particular types of activity. The highest mean hours were spent on updating discipline or field knowledge (52%) computing/information technology (52%), updating teaching/training skills (46%) and industry liaison (46%). So, while large numbers reported undertaking some staff development activity on Training Packages in the preceding twelve months, the number of hours spent were relatively low in comparison to other areas.

Recent formal professional development accessed by language, literacy and numeracy specialists surveyed by McGuirk in 2001 included Certificate of General Education for Adults moderation, National Reporting System training or moderation and computer technology training. Most of this training was face-to-face and of around one day in duration. Respondents had also attended shorter workshops on a range of topics including teaching mixed ability classes and working with students with disabilities. Conferences, such as the Australian Council for Adult Literacy conference and state literacy conferences, were one of the key professional development activities undertaken (McGuirk 2001, p.21).

Respondents also reported that they were using informal methods of keeping up to date through means such as professional reading, informal networks and professional networks (McGuirk 2001, p.21). From the data provided, McGuirk concludes that professional newsletters, journals

and conferences provided an effective means of providing information to language, literacy and numeracy practitioners.

In view of the discussion above on the impact of the new vocational landscape, it is surprising how few of these respondents had attended professional development on issues associated with the broader training agenda.

Attending professional development on the National Reporting System training rated highly in McGuirk's study. However, Trenerry (2002, p.21) in her comparative study of literacy and numeracy training practices across five industries indicates that the vocational trainers in the workplaces she researched, while incorporating language, literacy and numeracy into vocational training, were not familiar with the National Reporting System and did not use it. The difficult issue of upskilling non-specialists in a complex language, literacy and numeracy tool like the National Reporting System is discussed in a recent review of the National Reporting System (Perkins 2005).

Harris et al. (2001, p.62) concluded that at the time of their study there was evidence of an increasing diversity in the way professional development needs were being addressed. Dickie et al. suggest that one of the most significant developments in the last seven years has been the increase in the use of work-based learning in VET (2004, p.26). This work-based learning has been characterised by action learning and other forms of problem solving and self-managed teams, with strategies like mentoring, coaching and project-based learning becoming more and more common methods of professional development. Language, literacy and numeracy educators have also been involved in this form of professional development.

Sanguinetti et al. (2004) describe such an example of work-based learning in the Adult and Community Education sector. The authors conceived:

a participatory action research project that would engage adult literacy and adult and community education (Adult and Community Education) teachers in reflecting upon, sharing and documenting their practice with a view to making the connection between their pedagogies (understood as complex, situated teaching practices) and the 'intangible' processes of learners becoming more confident, self-directed and developing better social and cognitive skills'. (Sanguinetti et al. 2004, p.16)

Participation in work-based learning funded through Reframing the Future and LearnScope has offered valuable professional development opportunities to language, literacy and numeracy workers from all sectors and states in recent years. There have been a significant number of such projects with a particular language, literacy and numeracy focus and many more in which language, literacy and numeracy educators have joined with other educators from their workplaces and beyond to gain a range of skills. Examples of projects specific to language, literacy and numeracy educators are:

- ✧ An online project entitled 'Adult Literacy and Technology LearnScope', which was sponsored by Preston/Reservoir Adult and Community Education in 2004 to connect adult literacy teachers who wished to integrate technology into their teaching practice. The project description indicates that the aim was to use online communication to build a sense of community, enable people to share ideas, resources, opinions and other information.
- ✧ A Reframing the Future project conducted by the Adult Basic Education section of TAFE NSW South Western Sydney Institute which included training, support and mentoring for industry-based language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers. The project aimed to ensure that a pool of competent workplace trainers existed within the institute and to offer development opportunities to people willing to participate in workplace programs in the future.

A number of Reframing the Future projects have been specifically directed at upskilling vocational trainers to address the embedded language, literacy and numeracy demands of Training Packages. Two examples of such projects documented on the Reframing the Future website are:

- ✧ A project using action learning, facilitated mentoring and coaching and the establishment of a community of practice conducted at Southbank Institute of TAFE Queensland. In this project vocational trainers in two pilot areas developed their capacity to meet the requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework standards pertaining to the integration of language, literacy and numeracy in Training Package delivery.
- ✧ A project by the RMIT University Post Compulsory Education and Training Research Centre which used work-based learning methods of facilitated action learning and mentoring with a group of vocational trainers to raise awareness of language, literacy and numeracy issues, create models for the integration of language, literacy and numeracy within VET courses and to produce a professional development resource that would be available online to all RMIT staff.

There are also reports of informal learning occurring in many local initiatives. Some of these are sponsored by providers or state training authorities, but others are initiated by practitioners themselves. It is possible that, as Waterhouse et al. write, 'we have greatly underestimated the significance and the power of informal experiential learning' (2001, p.5).

Learning from peers through means such as team teaching remains an important informal learning strategy. In the Western Australian Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills, designed to provide an accredited framework for delivery of literacy and numeracy support to VET students, for example, there have been opportunities for both the vocational teachers and the literacy specialist teachers to develop their professional practice by collaborating closely with each other (Bates and Wiltshire 2001).

Online information, face-to-face workshops and conferences, discussion papers and journals of national and state professional adult literacy professional bodies such as the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, the Queensland Council of Adult Literacy, the New South Wales Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council, the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council, the Australian Council of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Associations and state Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages associations continue to be accessed by large numbers of practitioners and provide another valued avenue of both formal and informal learning.

In summary, a diverse range of formal and informal opportunities for professional development exist and are being accessed by the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce. There seems to be a clear consensus that reduced funding combined with expanding and rapidly changing roles and responsibilities mean that the demand for professional development outstrips supply. However, the data remains somewhat anecdotal. The difficulties identified in regard to accurate profiling of the VET and Adult and Community Education sectors (NCVER 2005) mean that an accurate picture of the nature, extent and effectiveness of current professional development cannot easily be compiled.



## What do providers and practitioners perceive to be the key professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce and what barriers exist to meeting these needs?

The VET national strategy, *Shaping our future Australia's national strategy for vocational education and training (VET) 2004-2010*, explicitly acknowledges the growing significance of knowledge and the ability to manage new literacy demands and includes specific reference to language, literacy and numeracy in two of the twelve sub-strategies in the plan (ANTA 2003). A number of high level drivers have promoted reflection on the professional development needs of adult educators in the last five years (Wilson 2003). These have included the development of the national strategy and its supporting action plans, the high level review of Training Packages and the ANTA project on innovation in teaching and learning. Changing market needs, technology changes and the need for resource efficiency have all impacted upon understandings of addressing workforce capacity (Wilson 2003, p.7).

However, expenditure on professional development at state or registered training organisation levels remains at between 1% and 2% of payroll, which is considerably lower than the minimum 3-4% of payroll invested in human capital development by high performing organisations (Schofield 2002 cited in Dickie et al. 2004, p.14).

Despite this relatively low level of investment there is widespread agreement that the professional capacity of the VET and community sector workforce should be continuously improved to cope with the increased responsibilities of knowledge workers in the new millennium (McKenna and Fitzpatrick 2004, Wilson and Corbett 2001, Harris et al. 2001, Kerka 2003, Trenerry 2002). Adult educators play a critical role in increasing the knowledge capacity of the wider community and:

There is great demand for VET teachers and trainers to be at the forefront of vocational education and training. They are the foremost lifelong learners with key responsibilities to train other lifelong learners in pursuit of vocational goals. Teachers and trainers in this sector are required to continue developing a new repertoire of knowledge and skills to address ongoing reforms, increased competition, rapid changes in industry and new strategies for delivery of VET. Their professional responsibilities place unprecedented demands for supportive staff development to be a priority and available on a continuum. (Harris et al. 2001, p.20)

Despite many good practice initiatives, Harris et al. believe that professional development planning in recent years has not wholly been constructed around such notions of VET teachers/trainers as key lifelong learners. Rather, decisions have been somewhat reactive and ad hoc and based on policy imperatives. The impact of external factors has meant that in too many cases professional development has been reduced to information downloading with a strong compliance focus (2001, pp.viii-ix).

The key stakeholders in the research project conducted by Harris et al. identified compliance with external agendas as the most pressing current professional development need, but when asked about future professional development needs answered that the development of individual expertise as a teacher was a key priority. Clearly, there is an inconsistency here. The resource pressures of the present, which are positioning compliance in the foreground of provider agendas, are unlikely to diminish, and the professional development offered in the present is what will lay the groundwork for meeting the challenges of the near future.

Particular challenges for VET practitioners for the next five to seven years were identified by these same key stakeholders in Harris et al.'s project. The challenges identified were: operating in a competitive market, keeping up to date with VET changes, flexible delivery, understanding and working with Training Packages and using technology (Harris et al. 2001, p.14).

A somewhat broader range of skills for all VET practitioners, leaders and managers and support staff are proposed as emerging requirements in Dickie et al.'s major report on enhancing VET workforce capacity. A strong focus is placed on the needs for more generic skills including:

- ✧ ability to deal with change and uncertainty
- ✧ client-focus skills
- ✧ management and leadership capabilities
- ✧ coaching, mentoring and networking skills
- ✧ using information and communication technologies
- ✧ knowledge work capabilities (accessing, creating and using knowledge to add value to organisations).

Clearly, the skills development required by language, literacy and numeracy practitioners will extend well beyond the ability to achieve compliance, however complex and critical this may be.

The meeting of such a breadth of professional development needs is particularly challenging in an environment in which there is already unfulfilled demand for professional development even in more routine and instrumental skills.

Dickie et al. argue that national investments which have been made in workforce development in Australia have been extremely effective, and recommend that a national role is maintained. Demand for national funding has continued to outstrip available resources with, for example, 44.5% of applications to Reframing the Future in 2002 not able to be funded (2004, p.25).

The problem of providing adequate professional development to adult educators is not confined to Australia. In the United States, Wilson and Corbett (2001) interviewed 60 adult basic education decision makers and practitioners from ten states and found that they were starved for professional development and that few individuals were participating in professional development activities to the degree they believed was needed to develop as educators. Many of the respondents in the Wilson and Corbett study (2001) were only able to participate in their own time and at their own expense. The study identified five factors that were adversely impacting on practitioners accessing employer-funded professional development. These were distance, time constraints, information gaps, goal mismatch and lack of face-to-face interaction.

These constraints closely reflect those barriers identified by Harris et al. for Australian VET teachers/trainers. These barriers were time, access, lack of funding, lack of information and cost. (2001, p.viii).

In an online forum of coordinators of Adult and Community Education providers on the professional development needs of four Victorian Adult and Community Education regions, the participants discussed the difficulties in attending centralised activities for practitioners from regional areas. The coordinators made particular reference to the problem of expecting sessional staff to attend such activities without payment and commented on the fact that Adult and Community Education sector funding simply did not allow for large expenditure on professional development (Wilson et al. 2001, p.12).

For rural and remote language, literacy and numeracy providers in Australia, problems with cost and distance are intensified. Most professional development in all sectors is held in the southern states and capital cities (McGuirk 2001, p.21). One means of addressing these problems has been the push for increasing online staff development. Despite the comments on the barriers to

attending face-to-face professional development opportunities, few of McGuirk's respondents had undertaken online professional development. In several other papers the benefits of face-to-face interaction and learning by being with others are mentioned. Finding delivery modes to best fit the needs of particular individuals and groups of language, literacy and numeracy teachers and tutors will continue to be an important challenge for policy makers and providers.

Wyse and Brewer discuss professional development issues for workplace assessors who are incorporating language, literacy and numeracy into their assessment practices. A key challenge identified is the provision of information and affordable relevant professional development opportunities to the many casual assessors in a variety of registered training organisations (2001, p.32). Wyse and Brewer make a number of recommendations including the development of a centralised register of assessors to facilitate the dissemination of information about professional development activities, the development of audience specific resources with good practice examples about language, literacy and numeracy issues, and pilot projects to support assessors in developing and maintaining their competence (2001, p.32).

The literature reviewed presents a strong case for more professional development being offered in all sectors and in a range of content areas. However, increased quantity does not necessarily equate to increased quality, and 'seat time' cannot be used as an indicator of effective professional development (Kutner and Tibbetts 1997, p.6). The relevance and outcomes of professional development are of key significance, particularly in a situation in which resources are finite if not diminishing.

In a TAFE SA teacher training project the 424 respondents were asked to comment on the relevance of the structured education and training opportunities they had attended over the past three years, excluding training leading to a formal qualification. The highest relevance was ascribed to activities updating knowledge of discipline area (80%) followed by industry liaison (73%) and updating teaching/training skills (68%) with an equal ranking given to upskilling in Training Packages (68%) (Bierbaum and Karthegisu 2003, p.7).

Wilson (2003) discusses the need for 'just in time' strategies for professional development and providing a range options to meet individual needs which also change over time.

This issue of the specificity of local and even individual need also makes it difficult to develop definitive answers as to what constitute key professional development needs of the field. An example of this specificity, can be drawn from an article in the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council journal *Fine Print*. In this article Victorian Adult and Community Education coordinators discussed the need of one Victorian Adult and Community Education region for professional development on how to develop good practice literacy programs for women from the Horn of Africa with no formal education in their home countries (Wilson et al 2001, p.12).

Although the great majority of practitioners appear to value professional development highly, individual factors may also lead to reluctance to participate in staff development. For some lack of motivation and negative past learning experiences are a further barrier to professional development (Wilson 2003, p.10).

The broader question of who is responsible for professional development is also the subject of some discussion. Wilson raises the issue of the lack of acceptance of a relationship of mutual obligation between provider and employee having an impact on the employee's willingness to participate. She suggests a lack of clear signals from providers to practitioners on the extent and depth of commitment to professional development (Wilson 2003, p.64). Other writers do not use the language of mutual obligation, but do agree that there needs to be balance and realism regarding the ability of providers to meet professional development needs which primarily benefit individuals (Harris et al. 2001, Kutner and Tibbetts, 1997, Victorian TAFE Association 2001, Dickie et al. 2004).

There does appear to be some divergence between the view of providers and practitioners on what professional development is needed and how it is funded. One aspect of this divergence is how important the two groups see investment in the professional development of educators as being. In McGuirk's study discussed above, language literacy and numeracy teachers ranked access to professional development for teachers as considerably more significant than did their program managers (2001, p.67).

Dickie et al. make a useful distinction in considering the different aspects of professional development. They distinguish between professional development as **workforce development** and professional development as a means to improve the **professional practice** of individuals. These two elements are explained in the report as follows:

Workforce development describes 'those activities which increase the capacity of individuals to participate in the workforce throughout their whole working life and which increase the capacity of firms to adopt high performance work practices that support their employees to develop the full range of their potential skills and value' (Schofield 2003 cited in Dickie et al. 2004, p.16).

Professional practice includes expert knowledge of the field, a deep understanding of underlying principles, accumulated experience in the practice of the profession, a familiarity with recent advances in the professional knowledge base, and mastery of the best available techniques and tools (Masters 2003, p.46 cited in Dickie et al. 2004, p.16).

This distinction appears to provide a useful rubric for considering the tensions between the views of providers and practitioners as to what counts, what matters and who is responsible in regard to professional development. As the above definitions suggest, provider interests particularly in the short term may correlate with the kind of activities that would fit more easily in the workforce development category. Some of the learning activities required to deepen professional practice may correlate more with the professional development preferences and priorities of individuals.

A further distinction that may be useful to make in considering the professional development offered to and desired by language, literacy and numeracy teachers is the division discussed by Rumsey (2002) and others between professional development related to teaching roles and professional development related to business or compliance needs. Some of the areas of work that are most contested by language, literacy and numeracy teachers/trainers are the areas of work which do not relate to their teaching/training role. These other responsibilities relate to aspects of registered training organisations as businesses, for example, taking an active role in marketing, implementation of quality assurance systems, meeting required enrolment targets and reporting to funding bodies. The attitudes of teachers and trainers to these other responsibilities will also impact on their attitudes to professional development in these capacities.

This is not to suggest simplistic binaries in which provider and practitioner needs or teaching and other responsibilities are seen as mutually exclusive. Rather, it is suggested that these may be theoretically productive distinctions for considering the complex issues associated with planning, prioritising and resourcing key professional development initiatives for the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce now and in the coming years.

## What existing good practice models can be drawn upon to inform future planning and delivery of professional development to the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce?

The above discussion in this literature review has highlighted that the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce is extremely diverse. It is not therefore feasible to develop a single or prescriptive best practice model (Harris et al 2001, p.57).

For language, literacy and numeracy educators there have been, and will continue to be, many good practice pathways to workforce development and improved professional practice. Some of these good practice pathways have been mentioned in the discussion above. Language, literacy and numeracy educators have been assisted in finding and following the pathways that meet their particular contextual and individual needs through national initiatives such as Reframing the Future, LearnScope, and the Adult Migrant English Program professional development programs and the work of professional organisations such as the Australian Council of Adult Literacy, the Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages and the Australian Council of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Associations. These national initiatives have been complemented by formal and informal professional development offered by TAFE, Adult and Community Education and not for profit system providers and by state professional bodies.

Professional development perhaps can best be thought of as a transformative process of critical reflection leading to changed understandings and practice. While some more instrumental goals can be achieved in short time frames, changes in behaviour and practice require longer-term approaches (Kerka 2003).

The United States report, *Looking to the Future: components of a comprehensive professional development system for adult educators* (Kutner and Tibbetts 1997), suggests that there are three components of a comprehensive professional development system:

- ✧ An intergovernmental infrastructure supporting professional development.
- ✧ The availability and delivery of multiple professional development activities and approaches based on systematically determined needs.
- ✧ Ongoing evaluation activities as an integral component of professional development (Kutner and Tibbetts 1997, p.1).

Harris et al. suggest a process framework for good practice. This is a model in which:

- ✧ key stakeholders have input into analysing and defining staff development needs
- ✧ meeting these needs is seen as a joint responsibility between the organisation and its staff
- ✧ a negotiated agreement is reached on how these needs can best be met for staff in all employment categories within the funding and time constraints
- ✧ diverse methods are used to address individual staff development needs
- ✧ activities are monitored for quality and relevance
- ✧ outcomes are evaluated beyond the level of participant satisfaction
- ✧ procedures are developed to make sure that the outcomes of staff development programs are maintained (Harris et al. 2001 p.57).

In the closing section of this literature review several components of good professional development practice models for language, literacy and numeracy teachers that have emerged

from the literature are reiterated. These components accord with the approaches to good practice suggested by Kutner and Tibbetts (1997), Harris et al. (2001) and Dickie et al. (2004) among others.

These aspects of good practice are highlighted in closing as they have been identified as good practice principles that will inform the research and resulting report on the current and future needs of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce which this literature review supports.

### **Collection and dissemination of good practice models**

Of the many existing good practice initiatives in professional development for language, literacy and numeracy teachers and tutors existing at the local level, only some are documented in the literature readily available outside of the institutions in which the initiatives occur.

The collection and dissemination of good practice models is in itself a strategy that may be used to inform future development planning at local and higher levels. Dickie et al. recommend that there be a national initiative to promote, facilitate and measure good practice for VET professionals (2004, p.27).

This would seem to indicate that good practice models should be sought at all levels, from case studies of individual projects reported in conference papers, provider and professional body publications to high level national initiatives.

### **Work-based learning**

Dickie et al. summarise the benefits of work-based learning as including the development of generic employability skills, organisations being able to customise the learning activity, flexibility, development of staff skills and knowledge base and the development of teams as well as individuals (2004, p.27). Henry et al. in their paper *Workbased learning in the contemporary Australian VET sector: a re-appraisal* (2001) trace the history of the discourse of work-based learning in the Australian VET sector which led to Framing the Future becoming an advocate and proponent of work-based learning as good practice for the professional development of the sector (2001, p.4).

Continued development of the pedagogies of work-based learning is likely to be of benefit both from pedagogical and resource efficiency perspectives.

### **Learner-centred pedagogy**

Good practice models of professional development for language, literacy and numeracy educators need to apply the principles of adult learning to language, literacy and numeracy educators as well as to their students. This may sound a self-evident proposition, but the discussions above on the focus on information downloading and compliance issues and lack of emphasis on holistic learning in current professional development programs indicate that there are discrepancies between theory and practice in this regard.

Henry et al. describe the theoretical underpinnings of work-based learning as learner-centred pedagogy informed by the debate relating to the 'development of theoretical perspectives relevant to adult education and learning, and that associated with the transformation of organisations into so-called "learning organisations"'(Henry et al. 2001, p.4).

Good practice work-based learning, then, needs to be learner-centred. This learner-centred work-based learning may have transformative potential.

### **Needs based assessment**

Individuals, groups and workplaces have diverse needs and differing locations, cultures and values. Serious needs assessments should be conducted in order to develop good practice professional programs to meet local needs. For Adult and Community Education practitioners

interviewed by Sanguinetti et al., for example, one of the key components to explore in determining needs was what the authors termed the pedagogy of place. Their participants:

talked about the importance of the culture of their providers, the significance of attitudinal variables, the importance of values, which are discussed, demonstrated and enacted within the Adult and Community Education setting where the learning is happening. (Sanguinetti et al. 2004, p.49)

A professional development program developed without cognisance of the interrelationships between these kinds of variables would not be one which met participant needs and would be less likely to be effective.

### **Systematic and serious evaluation of impact of professional development**

Harris et al. express concern that a culture is developing which does not highly value evaluation and quality assurance. The evaluation that is done does not seem to be seriously addressing the longer term outcomes of the professional development in terms of how it is likely to improve the quality of VET provision (2001, p.49).

Kutner and Tibbetts (1997) believe the crucial questions in planning professional development for adult educators are whether the behaviour of the practitioners changes and whether student learning is enhanced as a result of the professional development undertaken. They, too, argue strongly that evaluation of professional development is currently a weak link:

The field must move beyond what is referred to as the ‘happiness quotient’ – evaluation based on whether participants liked a professional development activity – toward more substantive evaluations. (Kutner and Tibbetts 1997, p.13)

As the authors acknowledge, measuring the impact of professional development activities on student learning is inherently difficult. It would be even more difficult to evaluate the impact on student outcomes of professional development less directly related to teaching activities. However, the point remains a valid one. In a climate in which available resources for professional development are diminishing, ‘unfocused and unexamined’ (Kutner and Tibbetts 1997, p.12) professional development is a luxury that cannot be afforded and cannot be considered good practice.

### **Balance between workforce development and enhanced professional practice**

Providers influenced by funding constraints and the need for compliance with the demands of external agencies tend to be more focussed on workforce development than on providing opportunities for critical reflection and the deepening of the professional practice of the individual. Workforce development activities are of course vital for providers and staff struggling to do more with less.

While practitioners need to accept some of the responsibility for the development of their own professional practice as individuals, there are strong arguments that self-reflective learning which leads to a sense of empowerment in individuals can engender organisational transformation (Henry et al 2001). A quotation from *Enhancing the capacity of VET professionals: final report* may best express this argument, and indeed provides an appropriate note upon which to close:

Investment in the professional standing and practice of VET practitioners will have a direct impact on the status of VET more broadly. If VET is widely perceived to be comparable to other sectors that require high standards of professional practice, this will improve the competitive standing of VET providers and increase client confidence. Importantly, it will also reinforce the pride and commitment of those currently working in VET, and help to attract new staff to a highly valued, high-status industry (Dickie et al. 2004, p.7).

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# Electronic survey findings

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## Introduction

This phase of the research gathered and analysed quantitative information from 170 language, literacy and numeracy program managers (n=28), language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers (n= 86), vocational trainers who are incorporating language, literacy and numeracy into their delivery of Training Packages (n= 17) and volunteer tutors delivering English language, literacy and numeracy tuition in community settings (n=39).

Data was gathered from across three states - NSW, Victoria and South Australia - in order to provide a snapshot of the professional development needs of the workforce as perceived by the sampled respondents. Data was originally also sought from Queensland but due to the very low level of survey returns only minimal Queensland data has been included.

Information on professional development needs and offerings was also collected by email from a range of key providers of professional development to the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce. This information from providers across four states was thereby available to be cross-tabulated with the survey data.

The survey findings present a picture of an experienced, confident, diverse and collegiate group of practitioners and managers who continue to value professional development opportunities. The telephone interviews, teleconferences and focus group which form the subsequent stages of this research provided an opportunity to further explore and verify these survey findings.

## Survey methodology

### Survey purpose

The aim of this phase of the research was to use electronic surveys as a means of collecting quantitative data on the professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce. This quantitative, and largely objective, data would then be used to inform and frame the more qualitative and subjective subsequent stages of this research project. A sampling technique was used that would provide data from different states, geographical regions, employing organisations, work roles and modes of employment.

It was not the purpose of the electronic surveys to collect data that could be claimed to be statistically representative of the needs and views of all language, literacy and numeracy teachers and tutors working in all contexts. Such great diversity exists in the work roles and contexts of language, literacy and numeracy teachers and managers that to gain a representative sample across states and sectors would be extremely challenging. It would certainly require a much larger sample of data than it was possible to locate and analyse within the scope of this research project. Even with a larger sample, such an undertaking would remain fraught, as no mechanism currently exists to accurately quantify the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce in Australia (NCVER 2005, McGuirk 2001).

Two separate surveys were developed. One was for completion by program managers, defined in this instance as head teachers, coordinators and any other job titles in which there was a line management responsibility for language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, vocational trainers or volunteer tutors. The other survey was for completion by teachers, trainers and tutors.

Copies of these surveys are attached as *Appendix 1: Program manager survey and Appendix 2: Teacher survey*. Separate surveys for program managers and teachers were used to provide insights into correlations and mismatches between how these two groups saw current and future practitioner professional development needs and the usefulness of professional development programs being offered in their organisations.

Following discussion with key stakeholders in the research project, a target of 150 surveys to be analysed was agreed upon. Population statistics and information collected through consultation with key contacts were used to provide an estimate of the amount of provision in various states, regions and sectors. This enabled the calculation of the approximate number of surveys required from each state, region and sector to provide a generative, if not statistically representative, body of data.

## Sampling techniques

Electronic copies of both the program manager and the teacher surveys were distributed to selected key contacts in adult English language, literacy and numeracy tuition in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia.

The electronic surveys could not be sent directly to the individuals that would complete them, so a modified version of a ‘snowballing’ method was used for data collection (Minichiello et al. 1995, Sarantakos 1998). Selected key contacts were asked to distribute the surveys to staff, or to supply contact details of a more appropriate officer to undertake the survey dissemination. Respondents were given the choice of replying electronically, by fax or by reply paid postage, so that anonymity could be maintained where desired. The key contacts were selected after consideration of their capacity to reach a particular number of respondents. The goal was to reach the 600 potential respondents judged necessary to ensure the return of a minimum of 150 surveys. The exact number of surveys distributed to individuals and the exact survey response rate remains unknown due to the data collection method used.

Twenty-eight program manager, 86 specialist teacher, 17 vocational trainer and 39 volunteer surveys were returned. This exceeded the target number. Only four surveys were returned from Queensland despite parity in distribution and follow up by the research project team. After discussion with NCVET, the decision was made to proceed with the three states from which good returns existed. Volunteer surveys were delayed as initial attempts to collect volunteer responses did not yield enough returns. Volunteer surveys were analysed separately and then integrated into the findings presented below.

Table 1 below illustrates the breakdown of the surveys analysed.

**Table 1: Surveys analysed by state and sector**

<i>State</i>	<i>Program managers</i>	<i>Language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers</i>	<i>Vocational trainers</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>Total</i>
NSW	13	40	4	33	90
Vic	9	34	8	4	55
SA	5	9	5	2	21
QLD	1	3	0	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>170</b>

# Findings

The teacher survey findings are presented separately for each of the three sectors (language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, vocational trainers, and volunteer tutors) considered in this research. Totals provided in the tables that follow indicate that in some cases the teachers, trainers and volunteers responded only to those survey questions that were relevant to their experience.

## 1. Teacher survey findings: language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers

The greatest number of surveys was returned from language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, reflecting the dominant model of language, literacy and numeracy provision in the field.

### Demographic information and delivery issues

In Section 1 of the survey respondents were asked a range of questions to establish a broad demographic profile of the individuals surveyed. This information was requested to ensure that a good sample of responses was selected for analysis. The profile information facilitates contextualising their responses on their professional competence, professional confidence and professional development needs. The states from which the surveys were collected are illustrated in *Table 1: Surveys analysed by state and sector* above. The geographical regions from which the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers came are illustrated below:

**Table 2: Geographical region: language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers**

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Capital city	53	61.6%
Large regional centre	16	18.6%
Small regional centre	17	19.8%
Isolated area	0	0.0%
Total	86	100.0%

The specialist teachers came from a range of employing organisations:

**Table 3: Employing organisations: language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers**

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
TAFE	41	47.67%
Adult Migrant English Service	13	15.12%
Adult and Community Education	12	13.95%
Private Provider	6	6.98%
Community Centre	14	16.28%
Other	0	0.0%
Total	86	100.0%

Over two thirds of the survey respondents were employed as part-time, sessional or casual teachers with only 31.8% being in permanent full-time employment. The low number of full-time permanent workers reflects the finding by other researchers on the composition of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce (Dickie 2004, Harris 2001, McGuirk 2001).

The high number of part-time and casual workers does not, however, reflect an inexperienced workforce as the following table reveals:

**Table 4: Years of experience: language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers**

<i>Experience</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1-2 years	7	8.1%
3-5 years	11	12.8%
6-10 years	21	24.4%
11-15 years	20	23.3%
Over 16 years	27	31.4%
Total	86	100.0%

A high level of language, literacy and numeracy teaching experience is revealed in the table above. The fact that 54.7% of respondents have taught for over 11 years, and only 20% have taught for fewer than five years is likely to have significant impacts on their professional development needs.

Respondents were not asked to specify their age or gender, but the high number of respondents with extensive experience and the very high proportion of survey returns from women may confirm the older and female-dominated workforce revealed in other research into the socio-cultural composition of the adult language, literacy and numeracy education field (McGuirk 2001, Harris 2001).

In Section 1 teachers were also asked about their mode of delivery and 97.7% indicated that face-to-face training was their main mode of delivery. This extremely high reliance on face-to-face delivery may reflect organisational infrastructure or may reflect what teachers regard as the best pedagogical fit for the particular needs of their learners and was explored in subsequent stages of this research project.

Fewer than 40% of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers indicated that they were involved in addressing language, literacy and numeracy in the implementation of Training Packages.

### **Current professional development needs**

In the second section of the survey teachers were asked about their current professional development needs and interests and whether these perceived needs were being adequately addressed.

The responses to the questions in this section indicated that 96.5% of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers surveyed were confident that their skills, qualifications and experience enabled them to teach effectively on their current programs. In addition, 68.2% believe that they have the skills and qualifications that they will require in the next five years. As mentioned above, over two thirds of these surveys were returned by part-time teachers, so this level of professional confidence is clearly not confined to full-time permanent practitioners. Even with this high level of professional confidence 94% of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teacher respondents remain interested in participating in future professional development.

A solid majority of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teacher respondents (61.7%) are satisfied that their professional development needs are being adequately addressed. Seventy-eight per cent of the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers who responded to this question (n=66) had attended a professional development activity within the preceding six months, with a further 14.3% having attended a professional development activity within the preceding year. Only 1.2% (n=1) had never attended a professional development activity.

Eighty-eight per cent of teachers regarded the last professional development attended as very relevant or fairly relevant to their work. The most frequently reported activities were professional development related to assessment (n=11), professional development related to implementation of a specific course (n=5) and professional development related to dealing with specific learner types, for example learners with disabilities (n=5).

Over one third of teachers surveyed felt that the area of work in which they needed the most professional development was teaching practice (n=28). The remaining two thirds of teachers were spread relatively evenly across the other available response categories of reporting on student outcomes, administrative tasks related to student records, Training Package implementation and incorporating employability skills into their teaching.

An overwhelming preference emerged for the face-to-face delivery of professional development, with only 1.2% of respondents (n=1) choosing online delivery as their preferred mode of professional development delivery. Sixty three per cent of teachers chose short 'hands on' workshops led by expert practitioners as their preferred mode. Another 13% favoured one or two day conferences. A significant almost 12% of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers considered peer support as the best option. No respondents regarded formal qualifications through the university sector as the best means of professional development.

The strong preference of this group for face-to-face professional development is of interest and was investigated and discussed further in the telephone interviews in the next phase of this research project. One issue explored further was whether the fact that 97.7% of teachers are mainly delivering face-to-face is based purely on infrastructural factors or whether it reflects pedagogic views on adult learning, including perhaps their own learning preferences. The demographic of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers may also be of relevance here. Variables such as age (and hence closeness to retirement) and gender may be impacting on uptake of online or blended learning.

### **Exploring strengths and weaknesses**

Section 3 attempted to drill deeper into perceptions of skills and skills gaps in teaching and other aspects of work roles. Respondents were asked to rate themselves as weak to strong on a detailed range of applicable skills and sub-skills under the categories of classroom management, teaching, assessing, incorporating language, literacy and numeracy into Training Package delivery, incorporating employability skills into delivery and in the non-teaching tasks associated with their roles.

The striking result of this detailed skills profile was that the majority of respondents rated themselves as strong for almost all aspects of their role. The only clear exception to this tendency was in relation to assisting in preparing tenders, in which only around 12% of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers assessed themselves as strong.

This is not to suggest that all specialist teachers felt wholly competent in all aspects of their work practice. There were some areas where less confidence was discernible, such as teaching numeracy. However, the quite high level of confidence displayed in these responses corroborates the finding that 96.5% of these practitioners see themselves as competent in their current roles.

It is interesting that over one third of teachers surveyed felt that the area in which they needed the most professional development was teaching practice yet the respondents overall feel so competent in their current roles. This desire for professional development related to teaching practice, then, may indicate that teaching practice remains the area in which these teachers' interests lie.

In Section 3 teachers were also given an opportunity to list their three most important professional development needs. The needs identified by the specialist teachers are summarised in Table 5 below:

**Table 5: Language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers' most important current professional development needs**

<i>Skill area</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Aspects of practical teaching	48	51.06%
Administration and reporting	14	14.89%
Development of information and communications technology	17	18.09%
Assessment	8	8.51%
Training Package related	2	2.13%
Employability skills	3	3.19%
Further study leading to formal qualifications	2	2.13%
Total number of responses	94	100.0%

Twenty people responded that they had no particular professional development needs.

### Professional development needs for future teaching

In Section 4 of the survey teachers were asked to select from a list of options their most important professional development needs for future teaching and for other aspects of their future work role. This information about future professional development needs becomes particularly important in view of the discussion above on specialist teachers' high level of confidence in their competence in current work roles. The responses to these two questions are summarised in the two following tables.

**Table 6: Language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers' key future teaching-related professional development needs**

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Use of information technology to prepare deliver and assess language, literacy and numeracy teaching	36	42.8%
Achieving consistent and reliable assessment practices among teachers delivering the same program	18	21.4%
Developing skills to meet the needs of specific learner groups (eg young people at risk, learners with a history of torture or trauma)	9	10.7%
Implementing language, literacy and numeracy curricula	1	1.2%
Implementing Training Package qualifications	2	2.4%
Teaching language, literacy and numeracy skills you have not taught before	8	9.5%
Teaching learner groups you have not taught before	4	4.8%
Other	3	3.6%
None	3	3.6%
Total	84	100.0%

Over 40% of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers identified using information and communications technology skills in delivery and assessment as an important professional development need in relation to their future teaching role. This becomes an interesting finding when considered in conjunction with the fact that almost 98% of current delivery by these same teachers is largely face-to-face and that only one respondent favoured online as the best means of accessing professional development. The subsequent phases of this research project attempt to ascertain why specialist teachers feel that information and communications technology delivery

skills will be so relevant in the future, and whether teachers' current lack of interest in teaching and learning using information and communications technology reflects their technological competence and confidence in using new technology, their beliefs about teaching and learning language, literacy and numeracy, or the organisational infrastructure of their workplace.

**Table 7: Language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers' key future non-teaching professional development needs**

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Providing professional development to peers	16	20.3%
Material or curriculum development	40	50.6%
Tendering for external funding	3	3.8%
Implementing externally funded projects	4	5.1%
Supervising staff	2	2.5%
Other	2	2.5%
None	12	15.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

It is interesting that language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers place such a strong emphasis on gaining skills in material or curriculum development in their future work. Material and curriculum development is the option in the non-teaching duties question that correlates most closely with the teaching role.

While only 3.6% of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers believed that they had no urgent professional development needs for their future teaching role, 15.2% said that they had no urgent needs for their non-teaching work roles. This and the choices made in regard to greatest future professional development need questions seem to indicate that the specialist teachers surveyed see themselves as continuing in their teaching role for the foreseeable future. Perhaps this is not surprising given that these teachers have chosen to stay in the profession as teachers for many years as discussed above.

Almost 60% of specialist teachers indicated their willingness to be contacted for follow-up telephone interviews.

## 2. Teacher survey findings: vocational trainers

### Demographic information

Findings from the responses of 17 vocational trainers from NSW (four), from Victoria (eight) and from South Australia (five) are analysed below.

The vocational trainers come from a range of geographical regions and employing organisations as indicated in the tables below.

**Table 8: Geographical region: vocational trainers**

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Capital city	9	52.94%
Large regional centre	3	17.65%
Small regional centre	5	29.41%
Isolated area	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



**Table 9: Employing organisations: vocational trainers**

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
TAFE	5	29.4%
Adult Migrant English Service	1	5.9%
Adult and Community Education	3	17.6%
Private Provider	2	11.8%
Community Centre	5	29.4%
Other	1	5.9%
Total	17	100.0%

Fewer responding vocational trainers were employed full-time than responding language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers. Under one quarter of the vocational trainers who responded were employed full-time. The remaining three quarters were part-time, casual and sessional workers. The exact nature of the work of the respondents who identified as vocational trainers is not clear from the survey. They may be language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers now working attached to workplace programs. They may be teachers providing language, literacy and numeracy support to students enrolled in vocational courses or they may be vocational trainers with expertise in addressing the language, literacy and numeracy needs of their learners.

Almost 50% of vocational trainers said they were involved in language, literacy and numeracy in the implementation of Training Packages. This is approximately ten per cent higher than the involvement of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, but not surprising given the more industry-focussed role of this group of language, literacy and numeracy educators.

The group of vocational trainers who responded were, generally, experienced practitioners but had less teaching experience than the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers discussed above. Over 40% of the vocational trainers (n=8) had less than two years teaching experience. Twelve per cent had between three and five years teaching experience with a further 12% having between six and ten years. Around 35% had over 11 years teaching experience.

All but one of the trainers cited face-to-face tuition as their main mode of delivery, with the other trainer normally delivering in mixed mode.

### **Current professional development needs**

The vocational trainers were, like the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, confident in their skills and qualifications with 88.2% satisfied that they were well equipped for their current roles. This group were, however, less confident about the future than their specialist teacher colleagues, with only 40% believing that they had the required skills and knowledge to teach in the next five years.

Eighty-two per cent (n=14) of the vocational trainers were interested in participating in professional development. While slightly less than the 94% of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers interested in participating in ongoing professional development, this still represents a very strong majority. Cost and time were the reasons given for not participating in professional development by those trainers not interested and by those who had not attended professional development activities.

The vocational trainers were evenly split on the issue of whether their professional development needs were being addressed, with 50% answering yes and 50% answering no. Around two thirds of the trainers had attended a professional development activity in the preceding six months, with almost 90% having attended a professional development activity in the preceding year. Vocational trainers reported diverse professional development needs with no group trends discernible.

Over 80% of these vocational trainers found the last professional development activity attended very or fairly relevant to their work.

There were noticeable differences from the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers in the response to the question on the work role in which the trainer needed the most professional development. A much stronger focus was placed on reporting student outcomes and incorporating employability skills, and slightly less emphasis on the need to improve teaching practice.

**Table 10: Comparison of current work role most requiring professional development**

<i>Area of work</i>	<i>Vocational trainers %</i>	<i>Language, literacy and numeracy specialists %</i>
Reporting student outcomes	31%	10%
Teaching practice	25%	35%
Incorporating employability skills	25%	15%

The stronger emphasis on reporting is perhaps not surprising given that the contexts in which vocational trainers work may be more frequently outcome-focussed than some of the contexts of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teaching provision. The quite high level of interest in employability skills among this group 25% (n=4) and the lesser but still significant 15% per cent of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers who chose this as the area of work most needing development (n=12) is interesting and may warrant further investigation.

The preferred means of gaining required professional development for vocational trainers were similar to those of their language, literacy and numeracy specialist teacher colleagues. Again, no respondents chose formal qualifications through the higher education sector. The strong preference for face-to-face delivery was also evidenced in this sector. No trainers chose online support as their preferred mode of learning. Sixty-five per cent selected 'hands on' workshops led by expert practitioners and 12% favoured one or two day conferences. Another 12% selected extended professional development programs such as the Adult Literacy Teaching course.

The fact that in both the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teacher group and the vocational trainer group no respondents saw formal qualifications through the university sector as the best option, and that only one respondent saw online learning as their preferred mode of gaining the professional development they needed, was striking and was the subject of further investigation in the other phases of this research project.

### Exploring strengths and weaknesses

Analysis of the detailed skills profile in Section 3 of the survey revealed an only slightly less confident group than the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, with fewer respondents repeatedly rating themselves as the highest number on the scale of weakness to strength. This difference was slight and not uniform and is perhaps not surprising in view of the fact that the vocational trainers who responded had fewer years of teaching experience.

The range of needs identified by the vocational trainers is summarised in Table 11.

**Table 11: Vocational trainers' most important current professional development needs**

<i>Skill area</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Aspects of practical teaching	8	28.6%
Assessment	7	25.0%
Administration and reporting	7	25.0%
Training Package related	3	10.7%
Development of information technology skills	3	10.7%
Total number of responses	28	100.0%

Four trainers responded that they had no particular professional development needs.

### Professional development needs for future teaching

The question about the most important professional development needs of vocational trainers for future teaching elicited responses somewhat different from their language, literacy and numeracy specialist teacher colleagues. However, both held similar views of their future needs for non-teaching aspects of their work role. The vocational trainers' responses to these two questions are summarised below:

**Table 12: Vocational trainers' key future teaching professional development needs**

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Use of information technology to prepare deliver and assess language, literacy and numeracy teaching	3	17.6%
Achieving consistent and reliable assessment practices among teachers delivering the same program	5	29.4%
Developing skills to meet the needs of specific learner groups (eg young people at risk, learners with a history of torture or trauma)	5	29.4%
Implementing language, literacy and numeracy curricula	0	0.0%
Implementing Training Package qualifications	2	11.8%
Teaching language, literacy and numeracy skills you have not taught before	0	0.0%
Teaching learner groups you have not taught before	1	5.9%
Other	0	0.0%
None	1	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

As can be seen from the above table, the two important teaching-related issues for this group are consistent and reliable assessment practices and developing skills to meet the needs of specific learner groups. The interest in improving assessing capabilities accords with reporting outcomes being selected as the area of work in which the vocational trainers needed the most professional development. The fact that almost a third of these respondents feel the need to develop skills for teaching specific groups of learners was perhaps less predictable.

**Table 13: Vocational trainers' key future non-teaching professional development needs**

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Providing professional development to peers	3	17.6%
Material or curriculum development	6	35.3%
Tendering for external funding	1	5.9%
Implementing externally funded projects	1	5.9%
Supervising staff	1	5.9%
Other	0	0.0%
None	5	29.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

In regard to urgent future professional development needs in other aspects of their work role, vocational trainers, like the language, literacy and numeracy specialists, were most interested in improving their competence in materials or curriculum development. As was the case with the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teacher group, there were more trainers who had no urgent future professional development needs in relation to their non-teaching roles (n=5) than those who had no urgent future professional development needs in relation to their teaching roles (n=1).

Only 17.6% of respondents from this sector of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce were willing to be contacted for follow up interviews.

### 3. Teacher survey findings: volunteer tutors

#### Demographic information

The survey responses of 39 volunteer tutors are analysed below. Considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the desired geographical spread of survey returns from the volunteer sector and the surveys finally analysed do not have as broad a demographic spread as those of the other two groups of teachers, with 33 volunteers coming from NSW, 4 from Victoria and 2 from South Australia. Eighty-seven per cent of these volunteer tutors were from capital cities and another 7.7% from large regional centres.

The volunteer respondents did, however, come from a range of employing organisations as indicated in Table 14 below.

**Table 14: Employing organisations: volunteer tutors**

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
TAFE	1	2.6%
Adult Migrant English Service	14	35.9%
Adult and Community Education	1	2.6%
Private Provider	0	0.0%
Community Centre	3	7.7%
Other	20	51.3%
Total	39	100.0%

The volunteer tutor response to the question on employment status is somewhat ambiguous. Some of the respondents appear to have quite reasonably interpreted this question as referring to their paid employment as opposed to the time spent volunteering. This and several other questions in the survey were perhaps not as relevant to volunteers as to paid language, literacy and numeracy workers. This highlights the difficulty of using one survey instrument for such disparate groups.

The great majority of volunteers were engaged in assisting language learners from language backgrounds other than English to develop their language and literacy (89.7%).

Volunteers had considerably less experience than the language, literacy and numeracy specialists and vocational trainers discussed above. Seventy-four per cent of volunteer respondents were new to the field, and 92% had less than five years experience. This may indicate a high turnover of volunteers.

All volunteer tutors were teaching face-to-face.

#### Current professional development needs

Approximately 80% of the volunteer tutors felt they had the skills and knowledge for their current roles and around 50% felt they had the required skills and knowledge to teach in the next five years. Twenty-five per cent of volunteers were not interested in participating in professional development.

Almost 56% of the volunteer tutors felt that their professional development needs were being adequately met. Time and the category 'other reason' were the most common responses to the question on the reason that volunteers were not participating in professional development.

Almost 70% had attended a professional development activity in the preceding year, with only 10.8% never having done a professional development activity. For 15 of the 31 volunteers who responded, this professional development activity was their volunteer tutor training course. Approximately 90% found their last professional development activity very or fairly relevant.

Most volunteers (67.6%) were keen to undertake professional development that would enhance their teaching practice skills. This may be expected given their relative lack of teaching experience. Less predictable was that ten per cent of volunteer tutor respondents indicated that the area in which they needed most development was Training Package implementation.

A strong preference for face-to-face delivery of professional development was evidenced in this sector, as was the case in the other two sectors surveyed, with over half of the respondents choosing short 'hands on' workshops as their preferred learning mode.

Among the volunteer tutor respondents there was more interest than among the vocational trainers and language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers in gaining formal qualifications through the higher education sector (7.9%) or undertaking extended professional development courses such as Adult Literacy Teaching (7.9%). Perhaps for some, volunteer tutoring represents a pathway into the paid language, literacy and numeracy teaching profession. To gain such paid employment, these kinds of courses and qualifications could contribute towards meeting essential requirements. As discussed above, in both the language, literacy and numeracy specialist group and the vocational trainer group no respondents saw formal qualifications through the university sector as the best professional development option. Volunteers were also more interested in online support, with 13.2% choosing this as their preferred learning mode as compared to 1.2% of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers and 0% of vocational trainers. Peer support was selected as the best way of learning by 10.5% of respondents. The least popular options were attending one or two day conferences (2.6%) and professional reading (2.6%).

### **Exploring strengths and weaknesses**

Analysis of the detailed skills profile in Section 3 of the survey revealed the volunteers to be a less confident group than the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers and vocational trainers. This would be expected given the significant difference in 'pre-service' requirements and length of experience of these volunteer tutors. Many of the volunteer tutors surveyed appear to be working in one to one tutoring situations as significant numbers answered 'not applicable' for the classroom management skills questions. Similar responses were evident in a number of the questions on non-teaching tasks. This too would be expected, as it is unlikely that these volunteer tutors are involved in assessment, reporting and tendering and other such duties to the same degree as paid language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers and vocational trainers.

In general, the volunteer tutors felt more confident in teaching numeracy, spelling and the four macro-skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking than in the teaching of grammar.

Two significant areas of need emerge from analysis of these responses. The first is that 48% of the 58 responses to this question (n=28) listed developing skills in general or specific aspects of English language, literacy and numeracy teaching practice as the key area. The second area of need to emerge was that 14% of the responses (n=8) related to access to better teaching resources and improving skills in developing learning materials. This would seem to suggest that volunteers are aware of the specialist knowledge and skill associated with language and literacy teaching and also aware that their volunteer training course has only begun to give them an idea of the complexity of what is involved in this field of education.

In sharp contrast to the other two sectors of the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce surveyed, only three volunteer respondents indicated a need for professional development in relation to reporting on student outcomes.

Almost one third of the volunteer respondents felt that they had no particular current professional development needs (n=12). Many of the volunteer respondents were relatively inexperienced and over half responded that the last professional development undertaken was their volunteer tutor training courses. This may have led to the expectation that particular professional development needs would exist for this cohort. This lack of particular professional development need is especially interesting in view of the fact that only approximately half of the volunteers felt confident that they had the skills and knowledge needed to teach in the next five years. The mix of messages regarding professional development emerging from the surveys was taken up for further investigation in the later data-gathering activities.

### Professional development needs for future teaching

Volunteer tutors predicted quite a range of teaching-related professional development needs. The strongest trend to emerge was that 25.6% of respondents saw teaching language, literacy and numeracy skills they had not taught before as their most likely need.

**Table 15: Volunteer tutors' key future teaching professional development needs**

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Use of information technology to prepare deliver and assess language, literacy and numeracy teaching	5	12.8%
Achieving consistent and reliable assessment practices among teachers delivering the same program	3	7.7%
Developing skills to meet the needs of specific learner groups (eg young people at risk, learners with a history of torture or trauma)	4	10.3%
Implementing language, literacy and numeracy curricula	4	10.3%
Implementing Training Package qualifications	2	5.1%
Teaching language, literacy and numeracy skills you have not taught before	10	25.6%
Teaching learner groups you have not taught before	4	10.3%
Other	2	5.1%
None	5	12.8%
Total	39	100.0%

Again, a significant minority of volunteers feel that they have no teaching-related future professional development needs.

Table 16 summarises the views of volunteer tutors on their non-teaching related professional development needs.

**Table 16: Volunteer tutors' key future non-teaching professional development needs**

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Providing professional development to peers	2	5.1%
Material or curriculum development	19	48.7%
Tendering for external funding	0	0.0%
Implementing externally funded projects	1	2.6%
Supervising staff	1	2.6%
Other	0	0.0%
None	16	41.0%
Total	39	100.0%

Over 40% of volunteer respondents saw no urgent future professional development needs in non-teaching aspects of their work role. It seems reasonable to assume that most of these tutors

made this response because they do not envisage that they will have non-teaching roles in their future work.

Of those volunteers that did identify urgent professional development needs for their non-teaching future work role, the need for professional development in material or curriculum development was clearly the most pressing as the table above indicates.

It is significant that material or curriculum development has emerged as the area that all three sectors see as their most pressing future professional development need.

Volunteer tutors were very willing to be contacted for telephone interviews with almost 80% willing to participate further in this research.

#### 4. Program manager survey findings

Twenty-eight program manager surveys were returned and analysed. This exceeded the desired target number of surveys from program managers. The term program manager was used to include head teachers, coordinators and any other job titles in which there was line management responsibility for language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, vocational trainers or volunteer tutors.

The program manager survey questions began by eliciting some demographic information from respondents on their employing organisations and their geographical areas. There was good representation from program managers across employing organisations, as seen in the table below:

**Table 17: Employing organisations: program managers**

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
TAFE	11	39.29%
Adult Migrant English Service	2	7.14%
Adult and Community Education	6	21.43%
Private Provider	3	10.71%
Community Centre	6	21.43%
Other	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Program manager responses were returned from all three states, but most responses came from program managers in capital cities (85.7%). The managers who responded are collectively responsible for over 800 language, literacy and numeracy education workers.

Professional development is being delivered by the organisations of all the program managers who responded. Program managers were asked to identify examples and modes of delivery of professional development activities undertaken by their staff members in the preceding year.

A total of 846 hours of professional development was reported as having been delivered over the preceding year in the organisations or sections represented by the responding program managers. The four areas of work on which the highest number of professional development hours were delivered in this period are represented in the table below:

**Table 18: Highest number of professional development hours**

<i>Professional development activity</i>	<i>Number of hours delivered in past year</i>
Classroom methodology	204 hours
Assessment and moderation	198 hours
Assessment using the NRS or the ISLPR	127 hours
Classroom management	120.25 hours

The responses of the program managers to the questions on the mode of delivery of professional development activities revealed a strong predominance of face-to-face delivery, some mixed mode delivery and very low use of distance and online delivery. The four categories in *Table 18: Highest number of professional development hours* above account for almost 80% of all hours delivered across all categories. Face-to-face delivery accounts for an average of 77% of the hours delivered in each of these top four categories and mixed mode accounts for a further 18% with distance and online combined accounting for less than 5%.

Program managers perceived teaching practice (39.3%) and training in assessing and reporting (25%) as the two key future professional development needs for their staff. These perceived future needs correlate with the high focus on classroom methodology and assessment and moderation in the professional development offered to staff in the past year. This would seem to indicate that the program managers surveyed do not foresee great changes in the roles of their staff in the near future. The program manager survey was less detailed than the teacher survey and did not provide the program managers with specific opportunity to comment on the importance of developing information and communications technology or flexible delivery skills or the need to develop skills in meeting the needs of particular groups of learners. As discussed above, these were two key issues identified by specialist teachers and vocational trainers. Program manager views on the importance of these two issues were canvassed in the telephone interview phase of this research project. It will be seen in the discussion of the information gathered from providers of professional development to the language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce (below) that these two issues were also identified by these providers as important areas of future professional development need.

Program managers reported that funding (47.2%) was the main constraint to offering professional development activities. Competing priorities were also seen as a significant constraint (24.5%) to the offering of professional development to staff.

Seventy-six per cent of program managers offered to take part in a follow up interview, if required.

## Summary of survey findings

This section of the report has analysed the results of 170 surveys on the professional development needs of people in the language, literacy and numeracy education workforce. The key findings from this section of the research are summarised below:

### **From the teacher survey (completed by language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, vocational trainers and volunteer tutors)**

- ✧ 95.8% of the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers and vocational trainers surveyed are confident that their skills, qualifications and experience enable them to teach successfully on their current programs, and 70.5% believe that they have the skills and qualifications that they will require in the next five years.



- ✧ Volunteer tutors are slightly less confident than the specialist teachers and vocational trainers, with 80% feeling they have the skills and knowledge for their current roles and around 50% believing they have the required skills and knowledge to teach in the next five years.
- ✧ Despite a high level of confidence in their current competence and, for most teachers and trainers many years of experience, the overwhelming majority of respondents (91.4%) remain interested in participating in future professional development.
- ✧ Volunteers had considerably less experience than the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers and vocational trainers with 74% of volunteer respondents being new to the field, yet 25% of volunteer tutors were not interested in participating in professional development.
- ✧ 61.4% of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, 50% of vocational trainers and 56% of volunteer tutors are satisfied that their professional development needs are being addressed.
- ✧ 91.5% per cent of all teacher and trainer respondents and 70% of volunteer tutors had attended a professional development activity within the preceding twelve months, with 90% of respondents across all three sectors regarding this activity as very relevant or fairly relevant to their work.
- ✧ Teaching practice remains the area of work in which most language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers and volunteer tutors express a current need for professional development, whilst vocational trainers see reporting on student outcomes as the area of their current work in which they most need professional development.
- ✧ An overwhelming preference exists for the face-to-face delivery of professional development in both groups with only six respondents out of the 142 teachers, trainers and tutors choosing online delivery as their preferred mode of professional development delivery. Five of the six who chose online delivery were volunteer tutors.
- ✧ No respondents from either the vocational trainer or language, literacy and numeracy specialist teacher groups regarded formal qualifications through the university sector as the best means of professional development. Three volunteer tutors expressed interest in gaining formal qualifications.
- ✧ Specialist language, literacy and numeracy teachers regarded upgrading their information technology skills, achieving consistent and reliable assessment practices and gaining skills to meet the needs of specific learner groups to be their most important teaching-related future professional development requirements.
- ✧ Volunteer tutors predicted quite a range of future teaching-related professional development needs with the strongest trend being that 25% of volunteer tutors saw teaching language, literacy and numeracy skills they had not taught before as their most likely need.
- ✧ Vocational trainers regarded consistent and reliable assessment practices and developing skills needed to meet the needs of specific learner group groups as their most urgent teaching-related future professional development needs.
- ✧ All three sectors saw material or curriculum development as their most important non-teaching professional development need. This may suggest that all groups see themselves as continuing in a delivery role into the future.

**From the program manager survey (completed by head teachers, coordinators and any other job titles in which there was line management responsibility for language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, vocational trainers or volunteer tutors)**

- ✧ There is a striking predominance of face-to-face delivery of professional development, some mixed mode and low reported use of online delivery.

- ✧ The highest number of professional development hours delivered over the preceding year were:
  - ◆ classroom methodology (204 hours)
  - ◆ assessment and moderation (198 hours)
  - ◆ assessment using the National Reporting System or the International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (127 hours)
  - ◆ classroom management (120.25 hours).
- ✧ Program managers perceived that teaching practice (39.3%) and training in assessing and reporting (25%) will continue to be the two key future professional development needs for their staff. A correlation appears to exist between what the program managers see as the two key future professional development needs and what the language, literacy and numeracy teachers and trainers have identified as their current or future needs.
- ✧ Funding was reported as the main constraint to offering professional development activities.

## Providers of professional development

A selection of key providers of professional development to language, literacy and numeracy teaching practitioners from four states were emailed and asked to describe the nature of the professional development their organisation offered and to specify the target audience and reach of their professional development programs. They were then asked the main professional development area to be addressed in their organisation's next professional development activity and were finally asked to predict the main professional development needs for their target audience over the next five years.

The professional development providers who responded service an extremely wide range of English language, literacy and numeracy practitioners: the National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, the Victorian Adult Learning and Basic Education Council, the Queensland Council of Adult Literacy, the Queensland Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Delivery Support Service Workplace Education TAFE SA, the NSW Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language, the South Australian Teachers of English as a Second Language, the Australian Council of Teachers of English as a Second Language Associations and Dare to Lead South Australia.

The subjective responses gained from this exercise provide useful information for triangulation with the survey responses and the interviews, teleconferences and focus group that followed the surveys. The research team was interested in exploring how closely the offerings of these professional development providers match the needs identified by language, literacy and numeracy teaching practitioners and what awareness and uptake of such externally provided professional development there is among the research participants.

The list below provides examples illustrating the range of needs being addressed by these providers in their next scheduled professional development activity for language, literacy and numeracy educators.

- ◆ Overview of the language, literacy and numeracy field
- ◆ Classroom strategies for numeracy and theory of adult numeracy
- ◆ Teaching pronunciation
- ◆ Literacy issues of students from non-English speaking backgrounds
- ◆ National forum on 'Culture, content and language teaching'
- ◆ Introduction to the National Reporting System and overview of the language, literacy and numeracy Unit of Competency in the new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment
- ◆ Information and communications technology and application to language, literacy and numeracy teaching and learning
- ◆ Current research into multiliteracies including technological literacy

- ◆ Needs of international students
- ◆ Well-being in culturally and linguistically diverse classes
- ◆ Digital storytelling as a means of developing literacy and technology skills
- ◆ State conference covering range of practical and theoretical issues
- ◆ Teacher standards for teachers of English as a second language
- ◆ Language development needs of Indigenous learners learning English as a second language
- ◆ Identifying and understanding social, educational and language learning needs of refugees

Key needs emerging from the responses to the request for providers to predict the main professional development needs and issues for their target audience in the next five years were:

- ◆ upskilling of language, literacy and numeracy teaching practitioners in meeting the needs of disparate groups of learners with a particular emphasis on learners from equity target groups
- ◆ keeping teachers abreast of national and state language, literacy and numeracy policy and curriculum in a constantly changing education and training context
- ◆ developing skills in flexible delivery to enable offering a variety of delivery modes and to assist in the development of multiliteracies in language, literacy and numeracy learners
- ◆ covering aspects of teaching practice
- ◆ updating knowledge of theories of language and learning
- ◆ training for leadership and management roles
- ◆ taking a cyclic approach professional development to cater for changes in personnel that will continue to occur due to the retirement of an ageing workforce and the high numbers of part-time and casual employees.

# Semi-structured telephone interview findings

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## Introduction

This phase of the research gathered and analysed qualitative information from 36 language, literacy and numeracy teaching practitioners and six language, literacy and numeracy program managers.

Data was gathered from across New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. The findings provide a collection of rich qualitative data from individual practitioners reflecting upon their own current and future professional development needs, learning preferences and constraints to meeting their professional development needs.

## Telephone interview methodology

### Telephone interview purpose

Semi-structured telephone interviews were used as a means of collecting qualitative data on the professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce. Forty-two participants were interviewed; these were selected from the respondents to the electronic surveys used in phase one of the research who had indicated a willingness to be contacted for follow-up data collection. The qualitative data gathered from the interviews was thematically analysed and was also used to inform subsequent stages of this research project, specifically teleconferencing and face-to-face information gathering sessions with the language, literacy and numeracy workforce.

The 42 interviewees were selected to represent the range of provider types, geographical locations, teaching statuses and sectors under consideration in this research project.

Table 19 below shows the breakdown of interviewees by state and sector.

**Table 19: Semi-structured telephone interview participants by state and sector**

<i>State</i>	<i>Program managers</i>	<i>LLN specialists</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>Voc. trainers</i>	<i>Total</i>
NSW	3	13	5	-	21
Vic	2	8	3	1	14
SA	1	4	1	1	7
Total	6	25	9	2	42

### Sampling techniques

Two separate sets of suggested questions and coding sheets were developed for teachers and program managers to provide insights into the possibly differing perspectives of the two groups in relation to professional development needs. The methodology and interview questions are attached as *Appendix 1: Preparation for semi-structured telephone interviews*.

Interviewees were contacted prior to the interview to verify that they were still willing to participate and to arrange a suitable time and contact number.

Interviews were kept to 20 minutes and researchers used a coding sheet for each interview. This sheet allowed the identification and subsequent analysis of themes emerging from interviews. During the teacher interview six main areas were covered.

1. The interviewees' professional development needs in their current roles.
2. Their perceived future changes in role and possible consequent skills gaps.
3. The constraints, if any, they perceive to meeting their professional development needs.
4. Their preferred means of gaining professional development.
5. How they see the best way of providing professional development in the future.
6. Examples of good practice professional development.

During the program manager interview five main areas covered.

1. Professional development needs in current staff roles.
2. Future professional development needs of language, literacy and numeracy teaching staff.
3. Constraints to meeting professional needs of language, literacy and numeracy teaching staff.
4. Sources of professional development for language, literacy and numeracy teaching staff.
5. Good practice professional development for language, literacy and numeracy teaching staff.

## Findings

### Teachers' interview findings

Most interviews were with language, literacy and numeracy teacher specialists, reflecting where most provision takes place in the field. Similar themes were revealed for these practitioners, the vocational trainers and the volunteer tutors, so the three groups are discussed together below.

#### **Exploration of professional development needs in current role**

Interviewees were first asked to expand on their most pressing area of professional development need. Interviewees provided a broad range of responses but in most instances their most pressing area remained the same as they had indicated in the survey. A number of key themes emerged from analysis of the interviewees' responses and are discussed below.

##### *Dealing with the needs of specific groups of learners*

Professional development to assist teachers in understanding how non-educational factors in learners' lives, as well as how their educational history may impact on their capacity to learn, emerged as a very major theme in the interview responses.

Special needs groups of learners included African students with low levels of literacy; students presenting with torture and trauma backgrounds (many of whom are psychologically damaged); and students with disabilities who do not necessarily disclose their disability so that the teacher has no information about their disability and how it may impact on the class. One of the teachers voiced concern about the growing number of youth at risk. He spoke of young people

who have sometimes been expelled from numerous schools with low confidence and self-esteem. Some have good skills but terrible family or other problems. So teaching them and trying to integrate both ESL and literacy needs in combination with the age-related and cultural differences is proving very challenging despite 40 years of teaching experience. (19)

In general teachers felt that, while they have the skills to teach English language, literacy and numeracy skills to these groups, they require professional development support in relation to the more socio-cultural aspects relating to these student groups.

#### *Resources and resource development*

Access to resources and resource development were nominated as major needs by six interviewees. Interviewees commented on the difficulty of accessing appropriate resources to meet the learning outcomes of specific courses, especially in view of the time constraints involved in customising material to meet the needs of diverse groups of students. It is debatable whether this is in fact a professional development need. Perhaps the resource issue is related to a reflection from teachers about time that is taken up in administrative and reporting duties, diminishing the time they have to prepare material for students.

However, the availability of appropriate resources and the time to locate and evaluate such resources are significant themes that recurred throughout the telephone interviews and the surveys that preceded them.

#### *Reporting on student outcomes*

Reporting on student outcomes, especially in the areas of assessment, validation and moderation was another of the major themes to emerge and recur. Language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers felt the need for professional development on the expertise required to assess and report validly and reliably, but linked to this was discussion and serious concern about the growing administrative burden placed on teachers to fulfil this role. Interviewees said that organisations were requiring systematic reporting on outcomes because of audits and accountability in the large number of externally funded programs. This sense that teachers need new skills to meet the need for compliance with regulatory, auditing and funding bodies and that this reporting has greatly increased the administrative workload of teachers has emerged as a theme in much of the recent research on both language, literacy and numeracy and the broader vocational education and training (VET) field (Waterhouse 2001, McGuirk 2001, Chappell and Johnston 2003, Harris et al. 2001, Dickie et al. 2004). The issue of reporting specifically on learner language, literacy and numeracy progress and outcomes was not relevant to the vocational trainers and the volunteer tutors, as this kind of reporting is not a large part of their role.

#### *Teaching numeracy*

Numeracy classroom strategies were identified as a professional development need for teachers who are isolated and would like to share ideas with other teachers and find out what they do.

Teaching numeracy was also identified as an area of professional development need by English language teachers who are now required to explicitly include numeracy in their teaching programs.

There was another group of teachers with maths degrees who are employed to teach numeracy, but who felt that their training did not equip them with the methodology to assist students with very low numeracy skills.

One teacher said:

Many of the teachers, especially those who weren't primary trained, are expected to teach numeracy. The issue is to do with how to unpack the concepts so that they are presented in the simplest possible way. Most of the teachers have good maths skills but cannot bring it down to the students' levels. (38)

### *Implementing Training Packages*

Training Package implementation was a key professional development need for those language, literacy and numeracy teachers who teach across vocational areas, in tutorial support and workplace English language and literacy programs. Linked to Training Package implementation was the need for incorporating employability skills into the curriculum. There were no identified resources showing how to do this in spite of the rhetoric surrounding the Employability Skills Framework. Some interviewees who nominated employability skills were found to have misunderstood the term and took it to mean teaching job seeking skills to students.

#### **Future role changes and skills gaps**

Interviewees were asked how they saw their roles or duties changing in the future and what skills gaps they saw emerging with any changes. They were also asked how they thought they would go about getting the knowledge needed to fill the potential skills gaps. Most of the same areas of need expressed by interviewees in relation to their current roles again emerged as likely future needs. This reiterates the finding from the electronic survey responses that most teachers and tutors did not perceive that their role would change very much in the foreseeable future. This is not surprising considering the large number of part-time or sessional teachers in the current language, literacy and numeracy teaching workforce.

The strongest emphases in relation to future skills gaps were placed on developing resources, meeting the specific needs of emerging groups and the development of information and communication technology delivery skills.

The issue of developing resources was often expressed in the context of teaching emerging groups with specific needs, and the inter-relationship of these two themes was the most significant response in regard to future professional development needs. For example some of the students with a disability in courses funded under the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme cannot achieve the outcomes of the basic course they are enrolled in. Skills are needed in developing resources to meet the needs of these students.

Teachers also felt the need for strategies to best assist the increasing number of African, specifically Sudanese, refugee learners with disadvantages far beyond a lack of English.

One of the interviewees said that the emotional, psychiatric and psychological problems of some of these new and severely disadvantaged groups of students are only being managed by organisations 'riding on the back of experienced teachers who are managing to cope with a very difficult situation' (1). It was suggested that providers offer staff training on critical incident procedures for traumatised learners as it was felt that inexperienced teachers would be at risk if a student were to have a panic attack or become aggressive. There is no evidence that risk management training is widely available to language, literacy and numeracy teachers. Such training is only routinely available to teachers working in juvenile justice or correctional contexts.

Many interviewees felt the need for professional development for working with youth at risk. As one of the interviewees put it:

The educational needs of young people at risk are very closely bound up with other needs, such as emotional, physical, mental health and financial and I want professional development that can explain how all their other issues impact on engagement with education and what strategies others are using to deal with these in an integrated way. (23)

The second most significant response to this question related to the computer skills that were perceived to be needed for future teaching. The skills that were identified as necessary included expertise in mainstream software packages, computer assisted language and literacy learning, how

to make computer classes more entertaining, online teaching, using the computer to create resource materials quickly, assisting older teachers to keep up with young computer literate students, how to contextualise computer skills in the classroom and computer skills in relation to administration documents.

Some comments indicate significant skills gaps in the information and communication technology delivery area:

This is a big area of concern because of emerging technologies with not many teachers in the age group who grew up knowing about computers and the new technology. Most at the college don't know much more about them than how to turn them on. (85)

Others highlighted the infrastructure requirements for information and communication technology delivery to be a realistic option:

The main need is in resources and funding for these resources. There is never enough money to buy the appropriate technology to support the needs of students who know a lot about computers. Staff have skills but not the technology to teach the skills. (38)

### **Constraints to meeting professional development needs**

The main constraints expressed by language, literacy and numeracy teacher specialists, trainers and tutors to meeting professional development needs were time and money. In some instances the time factor was a personal reluctance to spend extra time away from family and other commitments and for others it was the amount of time spent travelling to where professional development is offered.

The major response was linked to issues surrounding teacher release and funding for teacher replacement if teachers wanted to attend a professional development when they were scheduled to teach. Responses such as 'There are no replacement hours available for teachers to attend PD if they are on class at the time' (85), 'Not much is offered in the faculty because of severe cutbacks' (83), 'Getting release from classes is difficult because the budget is tight' (76) and 'I don't get paid because I'm a casual' (19) were typical of the kinds of constraints interviewees expressed. In line with findings in other studies, casual and part-time teachers were more affected by funding cutbacks and lack of access to professional development in paid time (Harris et al. 2001, Dickie et al. 2004).

The theme of lack of time was not always linked directly to availability of funding. As one teacher put it, 'heavy reporting demands take up more and more of the time that once was available for things like professional development.' (60)

When the interviewees were asked if funding constraints would continue to be a barrier in the future, responses ranged from it will 'probably stay much the same' (86) to 'it will only get worse' (18).

### **Preferred means of gaining professional development**

There was a range of responses to the question of interviewees' preferred means of gaining professional development. By far the most popular means was short practical 'hands-on' workshops. Other responses included attending extended professional development similar to Adult Literacy Teaching, mentoring, attending seminars and conferences, professional presentations, informal small groups. A small minority, including two of the volunteer tutors, nominated enrolling in formal courses to gain post-graduate or other relevant qualifications.

Many of the interviewees commented on their belief that adult learning best occurred through the active participation that is possible in small hands-on groups. They valued face-to-face



learning, interactivity, practical and visual components to the sessions, the ‘opportunity to bounce ideas off others’ (5), and to ‘get input from other teachers in the group’ (86). However, it was clear from responses such as those below that teachers preferred “professionals” to lead these workshops. Reasons for preferring professional expertise included:

I prefer to rely on a professional or expert than sharing and caring with other teachers. (69)

This format condenses as much as possible into a short time. (6)

A good presenter really sparks you up. (52)

The face validity of the presenter is important. (96)

I like quality content coming straight from the horse’s mouth. (18)

### **Best way of providing future professional development**

The question of who is responsible for the professional development of practitioners is the subject of considerable discussion in the literature reviewed, with writers advocating balance and realism regarding the ability of providers to meet those professional development needs which primarily benefit the individual (Dickie et al. 2004, Wilson 2003, Kutner and Tibbetts 1997, Harris et al. 2001, Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

Two thirds of the interviewees nominated their organisation or employer as primarily responsible for addressing their professional development needs. The other third felt that the individual needed to take an active role. However, most people in both groups felt that both employers and the individual should take some responsibility for professional development: ‘the employer is responsible for some parts that are a compulsory requirement of the job and extras become the responsibility of the individual, especially when they are personal goals’ (67); ‘the employer should support, the manager should encourage, the self should take the initiative’ (16). The volunteer tutors generally expressed the view that professional development offered by employers was a good incentive for volunteers to continue to offer their time and expertise.

The majority of interviewees had at some time in their careers accessed professional development outside their employing organisations. The few who had not done so cited reasons to do with time constraints, the lack of communication with other organisations and the prohibitive costs of attendance. On a more positive note, some reported that they get enough input from in-house staff discussions.

Interviewees offered diverse examples of how employers and policymakers could best support the English language, literacy and numeracy workforce in professional development with no major themes discernible. Some of the suggestions to employers and policymakers appear below.

Offer a meeting time once a month or once a semester where there is paid release for all to come together as colleagues within an organisation. (67)

Support teachers outside the metropolitan area by putting specific language, literacy and numeracy teaching resources on the internet/intranet. Most support is of a general nature and needs to be contextualised. (83)

Develop resources to support the integration of basic skills into delivery of work competences. At the moment it’s either language, literacy and numeracy teachers teaching work components (and they can’t come to terms with the industry requirements) or industry teachers/trainers who don’t know much about language, literacy and numeracy teaching. (38)

Place more emphasis on formal training so that teachers are not “dumbed down”. There seems to be an acceptance that anyone can teach adult literacy and all you need is a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. (101)

Appoint strategic personnel at a local level who are committed to working on coordinating staff development and training. Teachers don't always know what it is they need, there is just this longing, and managers are struggling to cope with many demands and very diverse needs of staff members. (60)

Offer professional development to the whole staff, that is, don't hive off the full-time teachers from the part-time teachers and casuals. (23)

### **Good practice professional development**

The collection and dissemination of good practice models is important as it is a strategy that may be used to inform the professional development planning at local and higher levels (Dickie et al. 2004). Most interviewees could readily identify a professional development activity they had attended that worked well for them and that they would recommend as good practice. Most examples correlated to responses about their preferred means of gaining professional development.

- ✧ A good session on the International Second Language Proficiency Ratings system because it was hands-on. The initiator of the rating system was the presenter. There was lots of question and answer time. It was great because the person with the expert knowledge was on the spot and everyone could also get a lot of information from other people working in the field with the same issues. (86)
- ✧ A one day professional development called Takeaway: Eastern Region Language and Literacy Conference. It had active participation, with people learning by doing. Had a terrific learning experience by participating in a workshop designed to model how to get students in touch with their creative side by doing art. There was a skilled facilitator and a great group and a lot of learning. (19)
- ✧ Numeracy professional development on the ideas of fractals and mandalas and using these concepts as innovative ways to introduce numeracy in literacy classes. Content was fascinating. Very hands-on workshop and brought freshness to what you do. Terrific to learn something different and new. It makes your teaching fun. (12)
- ✧ Adult Numeracy Teaching that was of 80 hours duration. The content was not intrinsically fun but the presenter made it fun. There was a good group dynamic that was allowed to develop over a substantial time with a good presenter. (5)
- ✧ Organisation offers a one on one session with a computer expert to facilitate a teacher's learning about any aspect of information technology they nominate. For example, teachers can focus on administrative systems, material development or a PowerPoint presentation. (85)
- ✧ Action research project with five staff involved. It is most effective because they are working on their own identified needs. The only difficulty is that it is costly because of the need for paid teacher release for meetings. (38)

### **Program managers' interview findings**

Six program managers were interviewed, reflecting the major providers represented in the three states included in the study.

### **Professional development needs in teachers' current roles**

Several major themes emerged from the interviews with program managers. The two main areas of professional development currently offered to staff are professional development in assessment, validation and moderation, closely followed by professional development to address the needs of specific learner groups. These included African refugees entering Australia through the humanitarian immigration program, and learners with low levels of literacy in their first language. Other areas where substantial professional development is being offered are classroom

methodology (including teaching numeracy) and up-skilling teachers in their information and communication technology skills relevant to teaching.

It is interesting to note that the professional development reported as currently being offered corresponds to the areas of current and future needs identified in the interviews with teachers. The themes identified by these managers accord only in part with the findings in Harris et al.'s major 2001 report on the changing professional development needs of vocational education and training (VET) professionals, in which key stakeholders saw professional development on compliance with external agendas as the key current need of their staff.

### **Future professional development needs of language, literacy and numeracy teaching staff**

Program managers perceived that assessment and meeting the needs of specific groups were the main future professional development needs of their staff. The development of teachers' information and communication technology skills was also mentioned again as a future need.

In addition to these themes the issue of incorporating employability skills into the delivery of language, literacy and numeracy programs arose. Some of the interviewees took employability skills to mean job seeking skills and indicated that teachers needed to do more work on teaching these skills. (25) The interviewees who indicated an understanding of the recent developments surrounding employability skills expressed a need for professional development in how to integrate these skills and language, literacy and numeracy skills into content based delivery in language classes such as the First Aid Certificate (11).

### **Constraints to meeting professional development needs of language, literacy and numeracy teaching staff**

As in the responses from teachers, program managers nominated time and money, or funding, as the major constraints to meeting the professional development needs of their teaching staff. For example, one of the interviewees in the community sector reported that 'while there is a real need for disability support because of the growth in these students across all programs, the disability support has been "de-funded"'. (28)

Lack of motivation and competing priorities in teachers' minds were noted as impacting on teacher attendance at professional development activities. For example, teachers may 'feel they are too busy or have too much paperwork to attend' a professional development. (11)

Program managers indicated that some part-time teachers reported a lack of motivation in accessing professional delivery because they perceived that there was little chance of ever achieving full-time status. Conversely, they noted that some older full-time teachers did not see the need for professional development when they were so close to retirement age. The professional development implications of an ageing of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce also surfaces in other studies (Dickie et al. 2004, Harris et al. 2001, McGuirk 2001).

However, generally speaking, the program managers representing major providers indicated that their organisations provided substantial, systematic professional development for all of their staff. Full-time teachers, for example, are required to do a minimum number of days of professional development per year in some organisations. Part-time or sessional teachers may or may not take advantage of this professional development according to their work or personal situations.

### **Sources of professional development for language, literacy and numeracy teaching staff**

Five of the six program managers who were interviewed indicated that their organisation had a successful ongoing practice of collaborating with other providers to offer professional development to language, literacy and numeracy teaching staff. Collaboration included meetings with peer centres and colleges, the higher education sector and/or professional associations.

The remaining program manager indicated that her organisation did not collaborate with other organisations because the professional development offered was too generic and did not meet the needs of her teachers, who needed professional development that related specifically to their curriculum.

## Good practice professional development for language, literacy and numeracy teaching staff

One of the six program managers proposed a good practice example that encapsulated many of the aspects of good practice professional development valued by teachers in their interview responses to this question. This model was a one-day regional workshop that started with a plenary session, then split into parallel sessions for smaller groups and finished with a regrouping of participants. As the interviewee said ‘it satisfies the needs of the continuum of teachers, practical teaching ideas from peers, opportunities to network and share good practice’. (25)

Other good practice examples from program managers included ‘ongoing workshops that come from teachers’ needs that encourage a culture for teachers to ask for specific assistance’ (7) and the need to ‘follow the practice we use as teachers, that is, interactivity and practicality, to make the activity meaningful’. (25)

## Summary

This section of the report has analysed the results of 42 telephone interviews on the professional development needs of English language, literacy and numeracy teachers and tutors. The key findings from this phase of the research are summarised below.

### From the teacher interviews

- ✧ Dealing with specific groups of learners emerged as the most urgent current and future professional development need of teachers. This included understanding the impact of educational and socio-cultural backgrounds of disadvantaged learners on their capacity to achieve the outcomes of a learning program.
- ✧ Teachers perceived that the escalating amount of time spent on administrative tasks, such as reporting on outcomes to funding bodies, was time taken away from attending professional development activities and from developing classroom teaching resources and meeting their students’ real learning needs.
- ✧ Information and communication technology skill development was perceived as a need, especially in making use of multimedia learning resources and to complete teaching and non-teaching tasks more efficiently. However, the researchers perceived a discrepancy between teachers reporting the need for information and communication technology skill development and the interest or motivation to attend specific information and communication technology professional development programs.
- ✧ Numeracy and pronunciation teaching were the two specific skills nominated by teachers as their most pressing needs for professional development.
- ✧ Teachers reported the need for support to integrate language, literacy and numeracy skills into employability skills development, Training Package delivery and/or workplace delivery.
- ✧ Most interviewees nominated their employer as primarily responsible for addressing their professional development needs, especially in relation to their teaching programs.
- ✧ Funding and time were reported as the main constraints in accessing professional development. The issue of funding teachers to attend professional development is exacerbated by the large and growing number of part-time and casual teachers in the

workforce. There is evidence that these teachers are not able to access the same amount of professional development as their full-time colleagues.

- ✧ Some part-time teachers reported a lack of motivation in accessing professional development because they perceived that there was little chance of ever achieving full-time status. Conversely some older full-time teachers did not see the need for professional development when they were so close to retirement age.
- ✧ The keys to good practice professional development are an expert facilitator and meaningful content that relates to teachers' needs and is hands-on. The preferred mode of delivery is a short practical workshop.

#### **From the program manager interviews**

- ✧ Program managers perceived the present and future major professional development needs of language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers to be assessment, validation and moderation in relation to course delivery, addressing the needs of specific learner groups, and developing their own information and communication technology skills.
- ✧ Time and money, or funding, were cited as the major constraints to meeting the professional development needs of their staff. However, most program managers who represented a major provider felt that their organisation provided adequate professional development opportunities for teachers.
- ✧ Most program managers indicated that their organisation had collaborative arrangements with other organisations in order to offer a broad range of professional development to their staff.
- ✧ Features of good practice in professional development that teachers nominated were reiterated by program managers. Features included good facilitation, content that relates to teaching practice and provision of an opportunity for networking with other teachers.

# Sector-specific teleconference findings

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## Introduction

This phase of the research gathered and analysed further qualitative information from five language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers, seven vocational trainers and five volunteer tutors.

Data was gathered from New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. The findings provide a further exploration of the key sector specific issues emerging from the previous phases of this research project.

## Teleconference methodology

Teleconferences for each of the three sectors studied in this research project were used as a means of gathering interactive data. Four teleconferences were conducted in all. One extra teleconference was held for vocational trainers incorporating language, literacy and numeracy into their delivery of Training Packages to allow the maximum representation for this sector in this phase of the research.

Most teleconference participants were selected from those electronic survey respondents and telephone interviewees in the preceding phases of the project who had indicated their willingness to be followed-up in the later phases of data collection. Due to the lower numbers of vocational trainers sourced in the preceding phases of the research, several vocational trainers who had not participated in the preceding phases were invited to participate in this phase of the research, to strengthen the findings for this sector.

The teleconference participants were selected to represent as far as was possible the range of provider types, geographical locations, teaching status and sectors under consideration in this research project.

Several teleconference participants were unable, due to personal or technological reasons, to join the teleconference on the actual day and these individuals provided written responses to the teleconference questions. These responses have been integrated into the findings below.

**Table 20: Sector-specific teleconference participants by state**

<i>State</i>	<i>Language, literacy and numeracy specialists</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>Vocational trainers</i>
NSW	2	2	6
Vic	2	3	1
SA	1	-	-
Total	5	5	7

Teleconference participants were contacted prior to the teleconference to verify that they were still willing to participate and to arrange a suitable time and contact number. Participants were also sent copies of the questions before the teleconference so that the discussion of the quite complex questions could be more productive.

Teleconferences were kept to a maximum of 45 minutes and were recorded by the telephone company with participant permission.

Due to the differing experience and needs of the volunteer tutor group, the questions were modified to better reflect the issues and needs emerging from the volunteer tutor surveys and telephone interviews. The questions for the vocational trainers new to the research were also modified slightly to make them more transparent to people who had not participated in the electronic surveys and telephone interviews. Questions for each of the teleconferences are attached as *Appendix 2: Sector-specific teleconference questions*.

The thematic areas covered in the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teacher and vocational trainer teleconferences were:

- ✧ the degree to which participants' entry qualifications had prepared them for their roles and work
- ✧ strategies to address the finding that reporting demands are impacting on the nature of professional development required by teachers and on the time teachers have available to participate in professional development
- ✧ the interrelationship between access to professional development and a sense of being valued by the employing organisation.

The surveys and telephone interviews indicated that volunteer tutors were not affected by the reporting issue to the same degree as their paid colleagues. In the volunteer tutor teleconferences this question was therefore replaced by a more relevant issue:

- ✧ promoting interaction among volunteer tutors.

## Findings

### Language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers' teleconference

#### Participation

Five language literacy and numeracy specialists (two from New South Wales, two from Victoria and one from South Australia) were scheduled to participate in the teleconference. Due to technical difficulties one of the participants was unable to connect to the teleconference and provided written responses to the questions.

#### Entry qualifications

The teleconference revealed that participants had followed very different pathways to their current positions. Two participants had completed Graduate Diplomas in the language, literacy and numeracy field as their entry qualifications. One participant had a primary teaching background and had subsequently undertaken a Diploma in VET and the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. Another had done a practical course while in the field to augment her primary teaching background. Another had a high school teaching background and had moved into adult education initially as a volunteer in the TAFE system and later undertook a Graduate Diploma in Literacy to meet the requirements for working on the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme.

The individual participants had different views about how well their initial training had equipped them for their roles. Some experiences were negative and some positive.

I don't remember learning anything useful at all. It [the teacher training program] was very impractical and pretty theoretical really, and the supervised practicals that

we had were supervised by people who were called “cooperating teachers”, which was a bit of a misnomer really, who often didn’t know what they were doing either. So, when I actually started teaching part-time in TAFE I had absolutely no idea what to do.(70)

There was lots of being watched while teaching and my primary training gave me practical experience of building up literacy and language development skills.(23)

What all participants saw as critical to an appropriate entry qualification for language, literacy and numeracy workers was one which contained a substantial number of properly supervised practical sessions.

The message that emerged from the discussion was clear: theory is important, but learning by doing is critical and this was not necessarily reflected in the content and structure of many formal teacher training programs in the language, literacy and numeracy field currently being offered.

As one participant aptly put it, ‘teaching is about doing things with people’, and teachers need to learn not only what they have to do but how to do it.

Participants appeared willing to continue learning and upskilling throughout their careers. All but one participant had undertaken further formal courses in adult education or in language, literacy and numeracy teaching to enhance their capabilities and meet the teacher qualification requirements of their evolving teaching pathways.

### **Coping with reporting demands**

All language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers participating in the teleconference were in agreement that reporting on student outcomes was an issue strongly impacting on the professional development needs of teachers and on the time and opportunities that teachers had to focus on such needs.

The following main issues emerged from the robust discussion of addressing reporting demands.

- ✧ A duplication of reporting was currently occurring, with state-based curricula requiring different and usually more teacher-friendly reporting systems from externally-funded programs.

We are constantly documenting two different areas all the time....It just becomes mind boggling, because do you throw out your old assessments and just simply teach to this rigid criteria? (67)
- ✧ Compliance issues were overtaking teaching and learning as the priority in Australian Government-funded programs such as the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme due to the time-consuming and complex reporting, auditing and verification systems associated with such programs.

You are just teaching to simply fill out an assessment in order to get the competencies achieved, rather than looking at the whole purpose of teaching and a lot of other areas of teaching that just simply aren’t in the written record of what is actually happening. (67)

There is no acknowledgement of the difficulties that [complying] places on us of in terms of the integrity of what we are delivering. (60)
- ✧ The National Reporting System was being used for purposes for which the system was not intended and for which it was not an appropriate mechanism.

That whole notion of having valued assessment tasks that reflect the teaching and learning cycle goes out the window because you have to report on quite an onerous scale that was never intended as an outcomes system for a curriculum. Its purpose was never that. (60)



- ✧ Teachers are being required to store large volumes of student work for very long periods as evidence for auditing and verification processes.
- ✧ Teachers accepted that reporting was important and necessary but viewed the current situation as unsustainable and not commensurate with the reality of the conditions under which teachers were working.

We [community centre staff] are still expected to do all the work, we are still expected to do all the assessments. However, we only get paid for the hours we teach so we don't get any extra money for all the assessment we are doing..... and with the amount that the work is increasing, it is becoming more and more difficult and more and more cumbersome to get it all done, and especially when a lot of community houses really don't have the space to have a room where teachers can actually put their work and sort it and go back to it. Very little space to do it, very little time to do it and no actual pay to do it. (23)

In terms of the difficulty of understanding the NRS, I think when we first started to use the NRS I think the approach in most colleges was well let's sort of find shortcuts, because this is going to be hard and no one has enough time, so let's see how we go just doing what we were doing already and keep the independent verifiers happy with some kind of tenuous link to the NRS made in our reporting and that obviously didn't work. (70)

Suggestions were made by the teleconference participants for improving the required reporting process.

- ✧ Find ways to simplify paperwork required from teachers.
- ✧ Encourage funding bodies to accept that in a casualised workforce there will continue to be turnover of staff working on externally funded programs, so adequate time, and therefore money, needs to be allocated to ongoing professional development for teachers delivering programs requiring the use of the NRS or programs with other complex assessment or documentation requirements.
- ✧ Allow teachers to use reporting scales other than the NRS, such as the ISLPR where appropriate.
- ✧ Reduce the requirements for both the amount of evidence required to be stored and the time for which the evidence is required to be stored.

### **Access to professional development as an indicator of being valued by employer**

Participants felt that there was a link between access to professional development and a sense of being valued. The consensus was that for this to be so the professional development offered needed to be relevant to the day-to-day teaching work of the teachers concerned. Teachers felt that there was not often a clear understanding of what practitioners actually wanted and needed. For this to be achieved organisations needed to be willing to 'build the fire from the bottom rather than the top' and this was not felt to be currently always occurring.

Several of the participants commented that not enough of the professional development being offered was on teaching development. Instead, it focussed on administrative or management issues. However, it was teaching development that motivated and interested language, literacy and numeracy teachers. There was a strong sense that discipline-specific professional development was extremely important and that teachers remained 'so hungry for some sort of discussion and exchange about what they do in the classroom'.

This was not in all cases perceived as a devaluing by employers of the skills required for effective teaching practice, but perhaps more that employers were unaware of the ongoing need for deepening of teaching practice skills because they 'assumed we know what we are doing and

doing it brilliantly,' but teachers felt sure that it was not really the case that when you have 'finished all of your training and that is it, you are a teacher.'

The issue of the lack of and need for equitable access to funded professional development opportunities for casual and part-time workers was raised in this discussion as in other phases of this research project. However, teachers were not unaware of the budgetary constraints on their employers and felt that the needs of the individual had to be balanced against the capacity of the organisation.

## Vocational trainer teleconferences

### Participation

Seven vocational trainers (one from Victoria and six from New South Wales) participated in two separate teleconferences. The South Australian vocational trainer interviewed by phone declined the invitation to participate in the teleconference.

The vocational trainers were categorised into two groups to take into account the difference between language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers who supported students' language, literacy and numeracy needs concurrent to achieving vocational outcomes, and vocational teachers who took into account the language, literacy and numeracy needs of students while focussing on delivery of the vocational program.

### Entry qualifications

The two participants with a language, literacy and numeracy focus to vocational program delivery had primary school training as their initial qualifications in addition to Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. One of the participants suggested that a primary background was necessary in order to teach language, literacy and numeracy to adult learners.

I think it's essential that you have some sort of infants or primary background to teach LLN. It is useful when you have learnt to teach basic skills. (41)

Only one of the vocational teachers had formal or informal training in the field of language, literacy and numeracy teaching. It was apparent that these five teachers relied on language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers to support the students who were identified as needing language and literacy support.

I've always arranged for students to go outside for tutorial support even though I know it's a bit like telling them that they have to see the shrink. (89)

One vocational teacher with language, literacy and numeracy teacher training had a Graduate Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages that he had gained 20 years ago after identifying his own need for professional development to support the many students of language background other than English in his vocational class. However, he and the other vocational teachers concurred that there was little support in the organisation for this kind of ongoing professional development.

I don't think we get the time to cover LLN skills as part of teaching the content but there should be opportunities for training in understanding some of the problems our students have. And we need this training because we don't get much feedback from the specialist who supports the students in their LLN. But we never get to hear about any training along these lines. (29)

One of the recurring themes throughout the vocational trainer teleconference was for the need for more communication and feedback between the support teacher and the vocational teacher. Reasons for lack of communication and feedback were that the support was not coordinated adequately or that there were time constraints.

I don't think that vocational teachers should be up-skilled but it would be good if we could expand the specialist resource sections and give them the mechanisms to report back to the vocational teacher on what's happening. (29)

### **Coping with reporting demands**

Neither of the two language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers felt that reporting on student outcomes was an issue and suggested that if teachers set up a system, such as a spreadsheet, at the beginning of a course and record ongoing results it should not be an issue.

I make myself keep detailed records rather than leaving it all at the end and then having to pull it all together in a short space of time. (41)

None of the vocational teachers was required to report on language, literacy and numeracy outcomes.

### **Access to professional development**

There was consensus among the vocational teachers that if they wanted to participate in professional development to improve their skills in language, literacy and numeracy support they had to seek it out themselves.

This was in stark contrast to the professional support that was, reportedly, available 20 years ago in their organisations when external funds were more freely available to support the language, literacy and numeracy needs of students.

But support has dwindled away and it's hard to source it out for yourself because of time constraints and, to tell you the truth, I'm not all that interested in it at this stage of my career. (37)

One of the language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers involved in vocational training said that professional exchange happened infrequently at the local level but teachers exchanged ideas informally. She also cited time constraints as the main reason for the current lack and uptake of formal professional development.

The second language, literacy and numeracy specialist teacher reported on a professional development initiative that she is participating in. Twelve to 15 people are currently participating in a program to incorporate language, literacy and numeracy into implementing their curriculum in a variety of vocational areas.

Because the program includes people from trades as well as general education there is a useful exchange from colleagues to raise an awareness of language, literacy and numeracy issues. And it has helped people realise that everyone can increase their LLN skills, that it is not a deficit. (41)

### **Volunteer tutor teleconference**

One participant spoke for all of the volunteer teleconference participants when she said

The experience of helping someone else is extremely rewarding. (23)

### **Participation**

Five volunteer tutors were scheduled to take part in the teleconference, with one other promising to provide written responses to the questions. On the day of the teleconference, two tutors withdrew - one through ill health and the other through an unexpected clash of commitments. This report represents comments from the three volunteer tutors participating in the teleconference (two from Victoria and one from New South Wales) plus written responses from

two volunteer tutors (both from New South Wales). The South Australian volunteer tutor interviewed by phone declined the invitation to participate in the teleconference.

### **Entry qualifications**

#### *Role as volunteer*

It was clear from the responses to this question that the volunteers in the teleconference had a strong sense of the high value of their work to themselves, their students and to the wider community. All respondents agreed that they play a very important role in providing language and literacy tuition, and helpful social contact to people with little opportunity to attend regular classes. In carrying out their role, volunteer tutors see themselves as ‘important community assets’. All tutors said they were currently working with students needing English language tuition in a one-on-one tuition arrangement.

There was general agreement that the volunteer tutor’s role covers teaching practical life skills and cultural knowledge of how to do daily tasks in a particular locality in Australia, and that these aspects of their contact with their client were just as important as teaching English vocabulary or points of grammar.

#### *Volunteer tutor training course as adequate preparation for role*

The response was resoundingly positive. Four of the five respondents said their volunteer training course was a good preparation for their volunteer tutoring work. The two tutors with additional training in the education field (two had qualifications and experience in school teaching) or qualifications in fields relevant to their client base (eg counselling) seemed very comfortable in their role. Of the three tutors who had only the volunteer training course behind them, two were confident that they were doing a good job, and knew where to get help if needed.

Preparation and training were good. Support manuals are very helpful. (7)

The remaining tutor was quite emphatic that the training was inadequate. Already working as a tutor while doing the training, she knew at the end of the training program

that every person in [her] training group was about to be exposed to situations they were unprepared for....The role of a home tutor covers a grand arena, English is only part of it. We were never trained in any other arena, we are told to teach English and leave the rest to the professionals. How can we possibly do that? (18)

### **Access to professional development as an indicator of being valued by employer**

The responses to this question overwhelmingly indicated (four of five responses) that the tutors’ assessment of their value came from the satisfaction they derived from their tutoring work, not from their access to professional development.

I don’t need professional development to get the sense of being valued. My relationship with my students gives me that. (24)

Positive feedback from students and staff at the centre is what tells me I’m valued. (25)

The remaining respondent referred to her feelings of being undervalued by her organisation, and professional development was cited as a possible remedy.

However, despite the general acknowledgement of a high level of work satisfaction, four of the respondents indicated areas of professional development they would welcome from their agencies in the future. Two were to do with teaching learners at higher or lower levels; one was to do with cross-cultural awareness; and the third was to do with dealing with the ‘life crises’ the learners are experiencing.

### **Promoting interaction among volunteer tutors**

The overwhelming response to this question (four out of five) was that it is essential for volunteers to have more opportunities to learn from their peers and others in the field. Such meetings would constitute an excellent and cost-efficient form of professional development. Also, meetings of volunteers would also provide an informal opportunity for sharing experiences and strategies for resolving difficulties.

The remaining volunteer felt no need for engagement with others as she didn't find the work isolating. She cited shortage of time as the reason she would not be interested in interacting with other volunteer tutors.



**Australian Government Statistical Clearing House Approval Number 01608-01**

# Program Managers' survey

To be filled in by the Program Manager / Coordinator / Head Teacher.

Please respond to all the questions by clicking on the appropriate box or by typing in the text box provided. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

1. Please indicate the organisation that employs you. Mark one box only.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> TAFE               | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Provider        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AMES               | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Centre        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Community Ed | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |

2. What geographical region do you work in? Mark one box only.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> State capital city    | <input type="checkbox"/> Large regional centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small regional centre | <input type="checkbox"/> Isolated region       |

3. How many teachers, trainers or tutors do you manage?

4. What are some examples of English language, literacy and numeracy professional development activity undertaken by members of your staff within the past year? This may include informal training. Nominate as many examples as you can.

Focus of professional development	Mode of delivery (face to face/ distance / online/ mixed)	Duration
Classroom management	Click and select	
Classroom methodology	Click and select	
Assessing using the National Reporting System (NRS) or the International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR)	Click and select	
Assessment and moderation	Click and select	

Incorporating English language, literacy and numeracy into Training Package delivery	Click and select	
Incorporating Employability Skills into delivery	Click and select	
Preparation for tendering	Click and select	
Computer skills	Click and select	

5. From the list below, what do you consider to be the main **future** professional development need for your teachers? Mark one box only.

- Classroom management
- Teaching practice
- Assessing and reporting using accepted descriptors of language, literacy and numeracy competence (such as the National Reporting System (NRS), the International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) )
- Incorporating language, literacy and numeracy into Training Package delivery
- Incorporating employability skills into delivery
- Non-teaching tasks e.g. reporting, assisting in preparing tenders
- Student counselling
- Other (please specify):

6. What are the major constraints within your organisation on offering language, literacy and numeracy professional development? Mark **up to three** boxes only.

- Funding capacity
- Competing priorities
- No appropriate staff to deliver professional development
- Organisation too small
- Geographic isolation
- No emerging professional development need
- Other (please specify):

**Thank you. Please go to the next page.**

7. Would you be willing to participate in a brief follow-up interview (probably by phone) if more information is required?

Yes  (go to question 8)

No

8. If you answered Yes to question 7, please provide your contact details below. These details will be used solely for contact purposes, and will not be used to identify you, or the organisation in which you work, in the research findings.

Name:

Organisation:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Best time to contact you:

- Please provide an estimate of the time taken to complete this form. Include the time spent reading the instructions, working on the questions and obtaining the information.

hours

minutes

When you have completed your survey, please save your changes, close the document and return it by **Friday 13 May 2005**. You can

**email it** to [ELliteracy@tafensw.edu.au](mailto:ELliteracy@tafensw.edu.au)

**OR**

**print it** and fax to Jackie Cipollone 02 9846 8195

**OR**

**print it** and place in a hand-addressed envelope and mail to

Access Division

Reply Paid 73263

GRANVILLE NSW 2142

**Thank you very much for your time and co-operation!**





Australian Government Statistical Clearing House Approval Number 01608-01

# Teachers' survey

To be completed by Teachers/ Trainers/ Volunteer Tutors

This survey should take about 10-15 minutes of your time.

## Section 1

There are six questions in this section that seek background information about your current teaching work. If you work in more than one organisation, please provide the information that relates to the bulk of your teaching load. For instance, if you teach 10 hours per week at TAFE and 5 hours per week for a private provider, please provide information about your TAFE teaching only.

Please respond to all the questions by clicking on the appropriate box or by typing in the text box provided.

7. Please indicate the organisation that employs you. Mark one box only.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> TAFE               | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Provider       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AMES               | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Centre       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Community Ed | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

8. What geographical region do you work in? Mark one box only.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> State capital city    | <input type="checkbox"/> Large regional centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small regional centre | <input type="checkbox"/> Isolated region       |

9. Which category best describes your current role in the field of adult English language and/or literacy and/or numeracy? Mark one box only.

- I am a specialist English language teacher
- I am a specialist literacy teacher
- I am a specialist numeracy teacher
- I am a vocational teacher/trainer
- I am a volunteer tutor

10. Under what conditions are you currently employed? Click on the appropriate box that best describes your employment status. Mark one box only.
- |                          |                     |                          |                               |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Full time           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Casual or sessional part-time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Permanent part time | <input type="checkbox"/> | Casual (on call)              |
11. As a teacher, trainer or volunteer tutor, what are you primarily employed/engaged to do? Mark one box only.
- Assist learners from language background other than English to develop their English language and literacy
  - Assist learners to develop their literacy and numeracy
  - Assist learners to develop their numeracy
  - Assist learners to develop their general skills in language or literacy or numeracy as needed
  - Assist learners in the English language or literacy or numeracy that is relevant to their vocational course or training
12. Are you involved in addressing language, literacy and numeracy in the implementation of Training Packages?
- Yes
  - No
13. How many years have you worked as an adult English language, literacy, numeracy teacher, trainer or tutor? Mark one box only.
- 1 – 2 years
  - 3 – 5 years
  - 6 - 10 years
  - 11 - 15 years
  - More than 16 years
14. What is your main mode of delivery? Mark one box only.
- Face to face
  - Distance
  - On-line
  - Mixed

**Thank you. Please go to the next page.**

## Section 2

There are 10 questions in this section that seek information about your **current** professional development needs. Please respond to all the questions by clicking on the appropriate box or by typing in the text box provided.

1. Do you feel confident that your qualifications and experience provide you with the knowledge and skills that you need to teach successfully on your current program?

Yes

No

2. Do you feel confident that your qualifications and experience provide you with the knowledge and skills that you will need to teach in the next 5 years?

Yes

No

3. Are you interested in participating in professional development?

Yes

No

If you answered No, skip question 4 and go to question 5.

4. Are your current professional development needs being addressed?

Yes

No

Please skip question 5 and go to question 6.

5. What is the major reason why you are not interested in participating in professional development? Mark one box only.

Lack of information/notification

Cost

No time

Limited access, e.g. geographically isolated

Other reason (please specify):

6. Approximately when did you last participate in a professional development activity (e.g. a workshop session/conference/work based project) that was related to your teaching?  
Mark one box only.

- One month ago
- Six months ago
- One year ago
- Two years ago
- Never

If you answered Never, skip questions 7 and 8 and go to question 9.

7. What was the title of the last PD activity you attended?

8. For the purposes of your work, how would you describe the PD activity you attended last?  
Mark one box only.

- Very relevant
- Fairly relevant
- Not very relevant
- Of no direct relevance

Please skip question 9 and go to question 10.

9. What is the **main** reason you have never participated in a professional development activity?. Mark one box only.

- Lack of information/notification
- Cost
- No time
- Limited access, e.g. geographically isolated
- Professional development not seen as a priority in my work environment
- No real need for it in my work situation
- I'm happy to do independent action research in my work environment
- Other (please specify):

10. In which of your following work roles do you think you need the most professional development? Mark one box only.

- Teaching practice
- Reporting on student outcomes
- Administrative tasks relating to student records
- Training Package implementation
- Incorporating employability skills into delivery
- Other (please specify):

11. What do you think is the best way for you to gain this professional development? Mark one box only.

- Peer support
- Professional reading (books, journals, newsletters)
- One or two day conference
- Short “hands on” workshop led by an expert practitioner
- Online support for teachers/tutors
- Extended professional development program such as Adult Literacy Teaching
- Formal qualification through the higher education (university) sector
- Other (please specify):

**Thank you. Please go to the next page.**

### Section 3

This section seeks information about the areas of professional development that would help you in your work as an English language, literacy or numeracy teacher, trainer or tutor.

1. The table below lists a range of aspects of teaching practice. Please click on the appropriate box in each area that is relevant to your teaching (1 = weak, 5= strong) to indicate what you believe to be your strengths and weaknesses. Please click n/a if the aspect is not applicable to your teaching situation.

	weak ←————→ strong						
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
<b>1.1 Classroom management</b>							
Creating and maintaining a positive learning environment for all learners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Understanding and addressing the learning needs of special groups e.g. young people at risk, people with disabilities, victims of torture or trauma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Devising and managing group learning activities (pairs or small groups)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>1.2 Teaching</b>							
Teaching oral skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Teaching reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Teaching writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Teaching spelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Teaching grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Teaching numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Teaching study skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>1.3 Assessing</b>							
Using accepted descriptors of language, literacy and numeracy competence (such as the <i>National Reporting System (NRS)</i> , the <i>International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR)</i> or the <i>International English Language Testing System (IELTS)</i> )	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>1.4 Incorporating language, literacy and numeracy into Training Package delivery</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>1.5 Incorporating Employability Skills into delivery</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>1.6 Non-teaching tasks</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Assisting in preparing tenders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Student counselling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

2. Please identify your three most important professional development needs. You may have identified these in your answer to question 1, or they may be other aspects not included in the table. If you feel you have no important professional development needs please skip question 2 and check the box in question 3.

My most important professional development need is

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My second most important professional development need is

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My third most important professional development need is

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3.  I have no particular professional development needs.

**Thank you. Please go to the next page.**

## Section 4

There are two questions in this section that seek information about your **future** professional development needs. Please respond to the questions by clicking on the appropriate box or by typing in the text box provided.

1. Please click in a box below to indicate what you think will be your most important professional development need in relation to your future teaching. Mark one box only.
  - Teachers' use of information technology to prepare, deliver and assess language, literacy and numeracy teaching
  - Achieving consistent and reliable assessment practices among teachers delivering the same program
  - Developing teaching and classroom management skills to meet the needs of specific learner groups within the larger learner population eg young people at risk; learners with disabilities; or learners with a history of torture and trauma
  - Implementing language, literacy and numeracy curricula
  - Implementing Training Package qualifications
  - Teaching language, literacy and numeracy skills you have not taught before
  - Teaching learner groups you have not taught before
  - Other (please specify):
  - None
2. Please click in a box below to indicate what you think will be your most urgent professional development need in relation to other aspects of your future work role. Mark one box only.
  - Providing professional development to peers
  - Material or curriculum development
  - Playing a key role in tendering for external funding
  - Playing a key role in implementing externally funded projects
  - Supervising staff
  - Other (please specify):
  - None

**Thank you. Please go to the next page.**



## Section 5

1. If more information is required, would you be willing to participate in a brief telephone follow-up interview?

Yes (go to question 2)

No

2. If you answered Yes to question 1, please provide your contact details below. These details will be used solely for contact purposes and will not be used to identify you, or the organisation where you work, in the research findings.

Name:

Organisation:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Best time to contact you:

- Please provide an estimate of the time taken to complete this form. Include the time spent reading the instructions, working on the questions and obtaining the information.

hours

minutes

When you have completed your survey, please save your changes, close the document and return it by **Friday 13 May 2005**. You can

**email it** to [ELliteracy@tafensw.edu.au](mailto:ELliteracy@tafensw.edu.au)

**OR**

**print it** and fax to Jackie Cipollone 02 9846 8195

**OR**

**print it** and place in a hand-addressed envelope and mail to

Access Division

Reply Paid 73263

GRANVILLE NSW 2142

**Thank you very much for your time and cooperation!**

# Semi-structured telephone interviews

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## *Purpose*

The purpose of the 36 semi-structured telephone interviews is to collect rich qualitative data from individual practitioners reflecting upon their own current professional development needs, perceived future professional development needs, learning preferences and constraints to meeting their professional development needs.

## *Methodology*

- ◆ Interview participants will be selected from respondents to the surveys who have indicated willingness to participate in such follow up interviews. Over 70% of program managers surveyed and 45% of practitioners whose surveys have been processed to date have consented to be contacted for this purpose.
- ◆ Researchers will use the respondents quantitative survey answers to prompt reflection
- ◆ 36 respondents will be selected to represent the range of provider types, geographical locations and teaching status and sectors under consideration in this research project.
- ◆ 3 trial interviews will be conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the proposed interview format, questions and coding sheet.
- ◆ Interviewees will be contacted prior to the interview to verify that they are still willing to participate and to arrange a suitable time and contact number.
- ◆ During this preliminary call researchers will check that these respondents have signed the required consent form
- ◆ Interviews will be kept to 15 minutes
- ◆ Two researchers will be present for each interview and will use a speaker phone, so that one researcher can scribe while the other focuses on the communicative aspects of the interview
- ◆ Each interview will begin with welcoming remarks, expression of thanks and reminder of the purpose of the research
- ◆ The researcher who is scribing the responses for each interview will use a coding sheet. This sheet will allow the identification and subsequent analysis of themes emerging from interviews.
- ◆ Four main questions will be posed ( see below)

## *Draft interview questions*

### **Question 1: Exploration of professional development needs in current role**

One of the questions in the survey asked you to choose the role in which you needed the most professional development.

In your survey you indicated that XXXXX was your most pressing area of professional development need.

Could you tell me why this is important to you?

### **Notes:**

- ◆ Reference is to survey Section 2 Question 10 Teachers' Survey

- ◆ Researchers will use probes to draw out more information on why this option chosen over other suggested options. The options were teaching practice, reporting on student outcomes, administrative tasks relating to student records, training package implementation, incorporating employability skills into delivery and other (please specify)

**Question 2: Exploration of perceived future changes in role and possible consequent skills gaps**

How do you see your role or duties changing in the future?

What, if any, skills gaps do you see emerging with these changes?

How do you think you will go about getting the knowledge you need to fill these skills gaps?

**Notes:**

- ◆ Reference is to Section 4 Teachers' Survey
- ◆ Researchers will probe how and why teachers see their role changing, perceived implications for nature of, need for and responsibility for future professional development

**Question 3: Preferred learning style and delivery modes**

You said in your survey that XXXXX was your preferred means of gaining the professional development you currently need. Could you explain why you prefer this to other means of gaining professional development?

**Notes:**

- ◆ Reference is to survey Section 2 Question 11 Teachers' Survey
- ◆ The options were peer support, professional reading, one or two day conferences, short 'hands on' workshop led by an expert practitioner, online support for teachers/tutors, extended professional development such as Adult Literacy teaching, formal qualification through the university sector and other (please specify)
- ◆ Researchers will use probes to draw out more information on whether this option was chosen based on learning preferences ( for example factors effecting choice of technology-based versus face to face options) or constraints (for example lack of technological infrastructure or mode of employment)

**Question 4: Present and perceived future constraints to meeting professional development needs**

Do you face any barriers in accessing professional development? What are these barriers?

**Notes:**

- ◆ Researchers will use probes to draw out more information on the range of perceived constraints and whether barriers stem from the interviewees own circumstances ( for example lack of time) or from workplace constraints( for example cost or failure to provide information)

# Teleconference Questions

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## LLN specialist teacher teleconference questions

### Question 1: Entry qualifications

We would like to start by discussing the entry qualifications required to be an LLN teacher in your organisation. Do you think that the training you did to get your entry qualifications adequately prepared you for your current role?

If so, how and why? If not, why not?

### Question 2: More effective reporting mechanisms

In the earlier stages of this research project, many people expressed concerns about facing ever-increasing reporting and administrative demands. A significant number of teachers said that the time spent on reporting and administration was impacting adversely on their ability to focus on their teaching and also on their uptake of professional development opportunities.

Outcomes have to be reported, that is a given. However, some people might be doing it better or more pragmatically than others? Can you any suggest ways forward that might help LLN providers still get the information required, but lessen the demands on teachers?

### **Question 3: Access to PD as indicator of being valued by employer**

In the surveys and telephone interviews we have done people have reported very different levels of access to professional development. Teachers who were part-time or casual in general reported less access to employer funded professional development.

Do you see a relationship between having access to professional development and your sense of being valued in your work?

If there is such a relationship, how might it impact on your work?

### **Vocational trainer teleconference questions**

Most teachers and trainers, by now, are aware of the national move to embed English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) into the implementation of Training Packages. This has presented a challenge to teachers and trainers who are sensitive to trying to address a variety of student needs, especially in understanding how LLN interconnects with vocational skills.

The following discussion questions have been formulated to help us find out what professional development vocational teachers need to help them in their delivery.

#### **Question 1: Entry qualifications**

We would like to start by discussing the qualifications required to be a vocational trainer in your organisation. Do you think that the training you did to get your entry qualifications, or other additional training, adequately prepared you for meeting your clients' LLN needs in relation to your industry area?

If so, how and why? If not, why not?

## **Question 2: More effective reporting mechanisms**

Do you have to report on LLN outcomes in the context of your students' vocational outcomes?

In the earlier stages of this research project, many people expressed concerns about facing ever-increasing reporting and administrative demands. A significant number of teachers said that the time spent on reporting and administration was impacting adversely on their ability to focus on their teaching and also on their uptake of professional development opportunities.

Outcomes have to be reported, that is a given. However, some people might be doing it better or more pragmatically than others? Can you any suggest ways forward that might help providers get the information required on students' LLN gains within a vocational context, but lessen the demands on teachers?

### **Question 3: Access to PD to improve your skills in LLN support**

In the surveys and telephone interviews we have done people have reported very different levels of access to professional development. Teachers who were part-time or casual in general reported less access to employer funded professional development

Do you have access to professional development to support you in your role as a vocational teacher who is committed to supporting your students' LLN development in the context of their vocational area?

If so, what are these avenues of support? If not, what do you see as the major blockages that prevent appropriate support for vocational teachers?

## **Volunteer teleconference questions**

### **Question 1**

We would like to start by discussing your role as a volunteer tutor and the entry qualifications required to be an LLN volunteer tutor for your organisation. How do you see your role as a volunteer tutor, and do you think that the training you did to get your entry qualifications adequately prepared you role?

If so, how and why? If not, why not?

### **Question 2: Access to PD as indicator of being valued**

In the surveys and telephone interviews we have done people reported very different levels of access to professional development. Volunteers in general appeared to have limited access to professional development after their initial training.

Do you see a relationship between having access to professional development and your sense of being valued in your work?

If there is such a relationship, how might it impact on your work?

### **Question 3: Promoting interaction between volunteer tutors**

Volunteer tutoring can be isolating. Should there be more opportunities for volunteer tutors to interact with others to discuss issues that arise in their tutoring?

What do you think could be gained by offering such opportunities to interact with other volunteers or with other LLN teachers?