Not Your Usual Practice
Educational Voices in the Workplace
Rhonda Pelletier, John Molenaar and Katrina Hegarty
Part 1
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DVD: Kite Media

Funded under the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Project by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
Not Your Usual Practice: Educational Voices in the Workplace

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Not Your Usual Practice: Educational Voices in the Workplace


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Contents

Summary .................................................................................................................................................. 4
Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 8
Methodology ......................................................................................................................................... 11
Practice and Theory ............................................................................................................................. 20
Induction Activities .............................................................................................................................. 26
Implications .......................................................................................................................................... 29
References ........................................................................................................................................... 31
Appendices ........................................................................................................................................... 33
Summary

The Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL) was initiated by the Commonwealth Government twenty years ago (KPMG, 2006; Wignall & Bluer, 2007). WELL provides training in language, literacy and numeracy to support employees in retaining employment and developing their careers and to assist companies to increase productivity and become more sustainable. Since its inception, the WELL program has been adapted to meet the changing needs of industry. The diverse drivers impacting on the WELL program are reflected in a number of studies and report:

- The formal evaluation carried out for the Commonwealth Government by KPMG in 2006. This review highlighted the value of the program to employers and employees, and provided a near 360-degree feedback on all aspects of the program.
- Skills Australia – Foundations for the Future (2010) highlighted the need for a system that is more responsive to the needs of individuals and organisations.
- Skills for Prosperity – a roadmap for VET (2011) offers a detailed picture of how VET practitioners’ skills can be developed.
- Targeted funding – the Commonwealth Government has utilised WELL to support skill shortage areas such as those highlighted in the 2011-2012 budget: WELL will receive an additional $20 million dollars for 13,000 additional training places over the next four years.
- National Foundation Skills Strategy is a clear development of the policy and research directions of the past five years.

As core language, literacy and numeracy skills are identified and noted in training packages and employability skills are more closely integrated with LLN, the skill demand upon all educational practitioners is becoming clearer. Skills for Prosperity – a roadmap for VET (2011) indicates there is a need to broaden VET practitioners’ skills beyond their immediate or core disciplines: the experience of WELL practitioners offers one model for developing and integrating new skills.

This project captures one process by which educational understanding and vocational needs are being integrated effectively by practitioners who are willing to reflect upon, adapt and apply their understanding of appropriate provision. WELL practitioners, who are mostly qualified teachers, describe what they need to know to work effectively in the workplace and highlight the processes they think would most effectively support their skill development.

Much of the professional development opportunities available for WELL practitioners are centred upon the National WELL Conference and local state WELL Practitioner Network Forums. At the 2009 National Conference, a common theme underlining many discussions was the difficulty in finding appropriately qualified and experienced trainers and teachers to deliver the WELL program. The challenges in delivering the WELL program were also articulated – not only that it is difficult taking an educational practice into a commercial or social service environment but that WELL delivery is especially demanding upon WELL practitioners. (Berghella, Molenaar & Wyse, 2006). In 2006 The Professional development requirements of Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme Practitioners included 42 WELL practitioners from around Australia. The majority of participants indicated that they had secondary and TAFE teaching experience – mostly in English as a second language (ESL) or adult communication courses such as Adult General Education and programs for the unemployed. With the increased casualisation of the
vocational workforce it is no longer possible to use this data as an indication of where new WELL practitioners may come from.

The question then must be asked. Why do current WELL practitioners persist in a career that is apparently so arduous? If their motivation for staying in the WELL program could be understood it might be possible then, to understand how to recruit and induct new WELL practitioners.

In order to identify how training organisations could attract more practitioners to WELL delivery, this project formulated the following hypotheses to investigate what was essential for current WELL practitioners’ in their experience, knowledge and skills to keep them in the program:

- WELL practitioners do not experience different personal and professional advantages to those experienced by classroom-based practitioners
- It is not possible to effectively transfer methodological experience between WELL enterprise work sites and institution-based programs.
- Staff induction processes do not prepare practitioners for flexible practices between workplace and institution delivery.
- Recruitment processes are not effective for attracting new practitioners to WELL training.

The hypotheses assume that WELL practitioners, like classroom-based practitioners, are motivated by a range of affective and practical factors in their choice of work. Simple and direct questions, listed below, were developed to encourage the WELL practitioners to speak directly from their experience, and therefore to explore their personal and professional motivation.

- Where’s the buzz in WELL training for you personally and professionally?
- What types of support do you access for WELL?
- Is there anything that could be transferred or adapted from a WELL-style of delivery to a classroom or from a classroom delivery to WELL?
- How important is induction to the new WELL Practitioner?
- How can we attract people to WELL as a career?

Interviews were conducted with 33 practitioners across Australia. They came from public and private providers, in urban, rural and remote settings and some were also involved in the Indigenous Employment Program. In brief, and in answer to the hypotheses above, the WELL practitioners:

- share many advantages with classroom-based practitioners. However, the WELL practitioners’ experience of the immediate impact of their training was paradoxically a challenging aspect of their work and their greatest job satisfaction. Added to this, many practitioners enjoy the challenge of learning about new workplace cultures and work practices.
- often draw on support from a wide range of people including – colleagues, workplace personnel and learners. Learners’ work experience and knowledge of the workplace are great sources of subject knowledge and workplace protocols for practitioners, and so provide an essential support.
- are divided as to whether or not there is ready transfer of delivery practices between the workplace and the classroom. Several have been able to use their workplace experience to lend credibility to their vocational or pre-employment training in the classroom. Others believe that all language, literacy and numeracy skills are transferable. However, a number of WELL practitioners are reluctant to return to the classroom.
The variation between the practitioners’ responses reflects the cultures of their training organisations. In some instances, the training organisation can see the value in encouraging institute-based practitioners to liaise and work with WELL practitioners. The ability of the WELL practitioner to integrate core skills with workplace realia is highly prized as are their skills in listening to and working with industry. Occasionally, the WELL practitioners are able to recruit new practitioners from these types of interactions.

Not all training organisations find it possible to communicate and coordinate between delivery areas. In these circumstances the management of WELL practitioners’ knowledge and experience can be lost as the employment patterns for WELL do not fit readily into the traditional delivery of training institutes. When a WELL program is complete, the WELL practitioner is often looking for work. Some of the WELL practitioners were keen to have this noted: a WELL practitioner has no security of employment with their RTO.

- believe that providing an appropriate induction is imperative for new practitioners. The main vehicle for this was identified as mentoring over an extended period of time – from one project to two or three projects across different industries. Aside from mentoring, the practitioners also highlighted the key skills that a practitioner needs to learn to be successful in the workplace. In the process of discussing how best to induct new WELL practitioners, the means by which their learning could be transferred within their organisations also arose. In the most part this was discussed as a means of taking workplace knowledge into the classroom to give credibility to vocational learning for students or for liaising internally to inform other institute teachers and trainers about WELL and work related training.

- described several different attempts by their RTOs to attract new people to WELL. While it is clear than many institute-based teachers/trainers are curious about WELL, they are often restricted by their workloads from participating. When they are asked to describe their job, many practitioners commented that people did not understand the title ‘WELL practitioner’.

The information provided by the WELL practitioners gave valuable insights into effective induction programs which provided a base for the induction activities developed in this project. These activities are designed for use during inductions however they will also support current WELL practitioners’ ongoing professional development. The induction activities accompanying this report, and those included in the induction facilitator guides, suggest ways in which the activities could be used for professional development and on going mentoring for practitioners.

The profession development resource includes:

- A DVD of interview extracts with WELL practitioners
- Activities for inducting new WELL practitioners
- A set of instructions for induction facilitators

These were trialed with remote, urban, experienced and less experienced practitioners. The interview data also provides a number of suggestions to build a more sustainable cohort of WELL practitioners. These are briefly stated below.

1. Although induction is much praised and often described in detail, funding to support this is left to the RTOs. Additional support for induction is required to enable practitioners to work across organisational boundaries and to establish mutual professional development opportunities with industry. WELL training guidelines may also more clearly outline how non-teaching hours can be used to induct practitioners.
2. Support is needed to enable RTOs to cross-train practitioners and institute staff. While the drive to build in cross-boundary skills may sit with each RTO, to craft in accordance with their client and community needs, some support for this will be needed from the Commonwealth Government (Skills for prosperity, 2011) This would have the dual benefit of supporting the development of foundation skills and in introducing WELL to a wider range of practitioners.

3. As WELL is a project-based program; RTOs need to help practitioners manage their workloads so they will also be available for projects as they arise. The mis-match between the project nature of WELL and the semester pattern of delivery ‘removes’ many practitioners from the pool of those who could do WELL. Additionally, RTOs lose critical industry knowledge when they don’t provide flexible and supportive employment models for all staff and work practices.

4. While the Australian WELL Practitioners’ Network and the National Conference were referred to favourably several times for supporting practitioners’ general needs, specific regional and rural needs are not as evident. One practitioner based in northern Australia said she felt that all the support was for the ‘south’. This feeling that the spread of resources available across the country is uneven may be more widespread and should be investigated.

5. Promotion of WELL – the program and the practitioners’ skills – is needed and may provide a valuable driver for other educational sectors to appreciate the value of learning at work and of integrating LLN into vocational training.
Introduction

The Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL) has been funded by DEEWR to provide language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) support for employees and companies for over 20 years. The primary goals have been to support the LLN skill development of employees to:

- enable them to retain work, to participate in other training, relevant to their work roles and to have the opportunity to advance in their careers
- support employers and companies to see how LLN skills contribute to business goals

and in addition

- to support companies to become increasingly productive and sustainable through a skilled workforce (KPMG, 2006; Wignall & Bluer, 2007)

The program has demonstrated a great ability to evolve with the times. It has:

- provided support across a wide range of industries
- responded to budgetary increases by increasing the number of programs funded
- been made available to support apprenticeships in skill shortage areas
- implemented revised guidelines and reporting processes to reflect changes in training packages and reporting frameworks
- targeted funds for industry sectors with significant needs, such as Aged Care
- adapted to the training needs of its immediate constituents – State by State
- aligned to other training initiatives such as the Indigenous Employment Program (KPMG, 2006)

WELL funding draws together two groups of people – educationalists (RTOs and LLN teachers) and industry (companies and their employees). The guidelines set out for WELL training applications and the funding agreement enable the two groups to collaborate. Often, the key to the success of a WELL program is the WELL practitioner. Their work represents the convergence of learning and productivity outcomes. In providing suitable LLN training to employees, the WELL practitioner must become conversant with a range of company procedures and work practices. This enables the WELL practitioner to engage with learners’ work experience directly, drawing out the learners’ understanding of what is required and supporting that with the skills to communicate ideas and access information in workplace documents. It is hard to measure a direct return on investment for companies for this type of training, however companies do report positive outcomes from WELL training. (DEEWR; Industry Skill Councils, 2011)
The skill requirements for a WELL practitioner to adapt their practice to any variation in their workplace setting were delineated in The Professional Development Requirements of WELL Programme Practitioners, (2006). Basically, the WELL practitioner must have the skills to adapt their practice to any variation in their work setting. These skills include:

- flexibility to cope with macro and micro changes
- negotiation skills to meet the sometimes competing needs of a range of stakeholders
- understanding of learning issues sometimes faced by adult learners
- ability to work cooperatively with workplace/content specialists
- ability to work independently, often in isolation from colleagues
- ability to perform various roles, some of which are outside traditional teaching roles
- ability to use and adapt different modes of delivery depending on the learner, workplace and literacy requirements (pg 48)

The need to combine pedagogy and the above skills may contribute to the perception that WELL delivery is extremely challenging – whether as a manager/Coordinator or a practitioner.

WELL managers and coordinators at AWPN Forums often note that it is difficult to find suitably qualified and experienced WELL practitioners. Yet, when people do WELL delivery they often do it for many years. There are a number of factors that contribute to the difficulty in locating new practitioners. As noted by the WELL practitioners in this project, many people have not heard of WELL. When they do, as when WELL practitioners are able to 'showcase' their work at institute functions, other practitioners are interested in 'having a look'.

It is also worth considering if WELL practitioners work against their own cause when they highlight the complex mix of skills required for working effectively in industry. The long list of skills that are not linked to pedagogy or a specific vocational trade may seem daunting to other practitioners. Many of these skills fall under the broad title of project management and, as with many current WELL practitioners' experiences, may be learnt on the job.

As with the workforce in general, WELL is experiencing an aging of its workforce (NCVER, 2008). With the policy developments such as Foundation Skills and employability skills (DEEWr Budget Initiatives, 2010, and the drive to ensure that all VET practitioners can support the LLN needs of their students (IBSA, 2010), it has become a priority to understand why LLN teachers stay and remain as WELL practitioners, and, therefore, to find out how RTOs can recruit and induct new WELL practitioners.
WELL practitioners, and their RTOs, are well placed to inform other stakeholders in LLN provision and demonstrate the benefits of integrating LLN into workplace training. Roberts and Wignall (2010), in discussing the obstacles to the delivery of foundation skills within training packages, note:

‘In the implementation phase, industry demand for skills and qualifications influences the delivery decisions of registered training organisations (RTOs). If employers are not aware of the need to build Foundation Skills in their workforce then they will not expect RTOs to focus on this during delivery. Employers are often unaware of the benefits of integrated delivery and therefore unable to request it. However, many employers who have accessed the WELL program have witnessed the benefits of integrated delivery and have become more informed consumers who are willing to invest in Foundation Skills development in further training.’

Communicating about WELL seems to be an imperative for practitioners, RTOs and employers. Practitioners need to be exposed to the benefits of working in WELL and in the workplace perhaps in the showcase events mentioned above. Additionally, RTOs need to develop strategies that will allow practitioners to work across discipline boundaries providing professional development opportunities and, potentially, a different delivery mix. Employers need to be exposed to the benefits of WELL. With the development of the National Foundation Skills Strategy (2010) there has also been the release of a number of industry-based discussion documents: No More Excuses (2011) and National Workforce Literacy Project: Report on Employers Views on Workplace Literacy and Numeracy Skills, (2010). If the national ‘conversation’ about core skills continues with other discussions on skill development some of the issues raised by the WELL practitioners may be resolved.

This project has captured WELL practitioners’ motivation for teaching in industry, their strategies for locating and drawing on support, their ability to adapt to new work environments and their ideas for recruiting and inducting new WELL practitioners. Twenty-one interviews including a total of thirty-three people were held in each State and Territory (except the ACT). Extracts from these have been presented on the DVD. As a result of those interviews, and a literature review, activities have been developed and trialed to assist RTOs in inducting teachers and trainers as WELL practitioners.
Methodology

The focus of this project is to explore how RTOs can recruit and induct new WELL practitioners. It has been apparent at recent WELL National Conferences that finding and retaining appropriately qualified and experienced WELL practitioners is difficult, and that, as with the rest of the workforce, the WELL practitioner cohort is aging (NCVER, 2010)

It was also apparent to the research team that if the recent emphasis on the development of Foundation Skills and the LLN skills of the VET workforce (IBSA, 2010) stimulates more VET trainers and RTOs to actively integrate LLN (and employability skills) into their delivery there may be a new pool of practitioners to draw from – if only they could be alerted to the existence of WELL, and only if it could be appropriately promoted to them as a way of enhancing their careers in education. Berghella, Molenaar and Wyse (2006) highlight the intricate position WELL practitioners hold as they ‘bridge the divide between values that underpin the field of adult language, literacy and numeracy and the economic imperatives of the workplace.’ The similarities and differences between WELL and other LLN practitioners need to be explored to identify how best to recruit and induct new WELL practitioners.

The research in the project was used to generate material for the professional development activities on the DVD.

The following hypotheses were formulated to provide a reference point with the practitioners’ work experience in WELL delivery:

- WELL practitioners do not experience different personal and professional advantages to those experienced by classroom-based practitioners
- It is not possible to effectively transfer methodological experience between WELL sites and institution-based programs.
- Staff induction processes do not prepare practitioners for flexible practices between workplace and institution delivery.
- Recruitment processes are not effective for attracting new practitioners to WELL training.

The questions below were developed to encourage the WELL practitioners to explore their experience and knowledge, and to test the hypotheses.

These developed into six key questions:

- Where’s the buzz in WELL training for you personally and professionally?
- What types of support do you access for WELL?
- Is there anything that could be transferred or adapted from a WELL-style of delivery to a classroom or from a classroom delivery to WELL?
- How important is induction to the new WELL Practitioner?
- How can we attract people to WELL as a career?

Expressions of interest were sought from WELL practitioners across Australia to participate in interviews. Responses were received from most States and the Northern Territory. Contact with practitioners was
coordinated to fit in with other networking events and conferences as much as possible to reduce the interruption to their usual work routines and to maximise contact with as many people as possible.

A trial interview was conducted with WELL practitioners at Chisholm Institute of TAFE in Victoria. This helped to refine the interview questions and the interview process. With their permission, their interviews were included in the DVD. The first interviews were held in Darwin during the ACAL Conference in November 2010.

To draw as full a picture as possible of WELL practitioners’ experience, efforts were made to reach as many providers as possible – urban, rural and remote. The project also established a blog (www.eduvoices.wordpress.com) with the aim of providing practitioners, who could not participate in the interviews, with a way to comment and respond to others. The blog also provided a chance for interviewees to add further ideas, if they wished. While interest was shown from practitioners working out of Alice Springs and northern Western Australia, the constraints of their working conditions and access to communication restricted their direct participation.

Participants were asked to provide a brief profile including their years in WELL delivery, industry areas where they trained, their qualifications and location. The pro forma used during the project have been provided in the Appendices.

**Interviews**

Interviews ran for approximately forty minutes. On several occasions interviews were conducted with two WELL practitioners together. One panel discussion was conducted during the 2010 National WELL Conference in Melbourne.

The following tables demonstrate the range of experience and qualifications of the practitioners who participated.
Table One: Qualifications and years in WELL delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Years in WELL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Certificate IV in TAA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Certificate IV in TESOL</td>
<td>Certificate IV in TAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Primary) ongoing</td>
<td>Certificate IV in TAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>Diploma of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education – Special Education</td>
<td>Certificate IV in TAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Diploma of Education</td>
<td>Certificate IV in TAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Diploma of Teaching</td>
<td>Certificate IV in TAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>MA – Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>Graduate Certificate Adult Literacy &amp; Numeracy Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Economics</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma of TESOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master of Education - TESOL</td>
<td>IELTS Examiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>Certificate IV in TAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education - TESOL</td>
<td>Certificate IV in Training and Workplace Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education – English &amp; History</td>
<td>Graduate Certificate in TESOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma of Education</td>
<td>Diploma of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts – Education &amp; Psychology</td>
<td>Advanced Diploma in LLN in VET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Certificate IV in TAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>Graduate Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Diploma of Teaching</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma of Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Certificate IV in TAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced Diploma in LLN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>Certificate IV in TAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Master of Business</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts – English &amp; French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate Diploma of TESOL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twelve of the eighteen participants who provided a profile have less than twelve years experience in WELL delivery. Of that twelve, eight have at least one higher degree – a bachelor or post-graduate qualification. Of the eighteen profiles, nine have a qualification in teaching English as second or other language. While seven have a qualification in literacy and numeracy – some with the additional ‘adult’ in the title.

The impact of competency-based training on the qualification list is clear with 17 participants having the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and one the Certificate IV in Training and Workplace Assessment.

It is not possible to say that there is a move away from multiple qualifications based upon on a bachelor followed up by multiple qualifications. A larger sample of practitioners would be needed. With the development of the Vocational Graduate Certificate in adult language, literacy and numeracy practice (VGC) the core qualifications WELL practitioners attain may change but they may still build other skills onto it, such as management or trade skills – food safety, occupational health and safety – if they don’t already have a trade qualification. Future research may need to look at the perceived value of WELL delivery and whether or not any variation in that perception can be linked to the new qualification.
Table Two: Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria &amp; Tasmania</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variations between the total number of people who participated and interviews occur because some practitioners participated in the panel discussion and an interview in their own state or were interviewed with a colleague.

Table Three: RTO profile

Note: while some RTOs are counted as urban in this table, it does not mean that they do not also have rural, remote or IEP projects. If they are not counted in a sector it is because it did not arise in the practitioners’ conversation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural/Remote</th>
<th>With IEP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the interviews were filmed. All of the interviews were transcribed and the results were sent to the interviewees for verification. Some of the interview data has been removed to ensure privacy. As is the case with conversations, the interviews were interspersed with common verbal redundancies as speakers thought out loud or tried one way of expressing themselves before deciding to say it in a different manner.
There are common issues in all of the interviews. Yet there is a unique quality in each WELL program and within learners. Thus, rural and remote providers have very different logistical issues in accessing their clients compared to providers working in urban areas. Those working with indigenous communities must take cultural protocols into account. So while these types of issues – logistics and culture – arise in all projects, in some they have a more significant part in the success of a project. Extracts were selected to represent the points made by all of the practitioners. The final selections were then ordered to provide a thematic development for each of the questions. Some extracts not used on the DVD have been included in the induction activities, or have been used in this report.

**Induction Activities and Trials**

Sharing knowledge and experience with other and more experienced WELL practitioners was a key area of support for many of the practitioners. Nine induction activities with guides for induction facilitators have been developed based upon this information. The activities investigate the skills and knowledge the practitioners felt were paramount for a WELL practitioner to succeed. They include extracts from the interviews.

The guides, ‘A Professional Development Guide for WELL Practitioners’ (2009) and ‘WELL Professional Development Guide: Planning an effective WELL training project and preparing a successful WELL training application’ (2010), provided a detailed list of the skills needed to develop competent practitioners and conduct WELL projects at an appropriate standard. The 2010 guide offers specific activities to support WELL coordinators and/or managers. ([http://www.wellpractitioners.com.au](http://www.wellpractitioners.com.au) Note: at the time of writing this website was being redesigned.)

WELL practitioners interviewed for this project raised many of the key points that also appeared in ‘A Professional Development Guide for WELL Practitioners’ (2009). These points include: developing a new service, recognising the culture and priorities of the company, program design, and the processes of applying adult LLN in the workplace. The points the interviewees did not mention are also interesting – competency-based training; management of budgets, tenders and proposals; strategic processes; finance and budgeting. This is not to say these practitioners are not involved in these processes, or even responsible for them. Rather it points to their prioritising of the educational activities for a WELL practitioner and what they need to do to deliver effective programs – that is what they do first. The activities, then, reflect the stated need for new WELL practitioners to learn how to negotiate to establish an effective program in a company.

The activities and facilitator guides are provided in the next section of this report. The table below summarises the purpose of each activity.
### Activity Title | Description
---|---
**Balance of Power** | Explores the role of the WELL practitioner in the workplace in relation to the different stakeholders who have influence over what is delivered.
**Theory in Action** | Provides practitioners’ quotes to assist the new practitioner to clarify their own thinking on how they may enact their theory on site.
**Collaborative Practice** | Practitioners describe the ways they have worked with colleagues and technical experts at a work site.
**Mentoring** | Uses a practitioner's quote to introduce two views of how mentoring should be done. These encourage the new WELL practitioner to plan how their skills and knowledge might develop throughout their WELL practice.
**What are they on about?** | Practitioner comments are provided to encourage exploration of how they may apply to a new WELL application.
**Resources** | Practitioners build a resource list for a project, for themselves and for their RTO.
**Mapping practitioners’ skills** | A selection from the skills and knowledge in the unit TAELLN704A provides the base for self-assessment for WELL practitioners to plan their professional development.
**Scenarios** | What would you do in these situations? This provides opportunities to reflect on practice and identify solutions.
**Charting the course** | Provides two templates to use for planning a project. Planning starts at the macro level to map the major milestones before filling in the gaps with the smaller goals.

A facilitator guide accompanies the activities. The guides are not the only way to use the activities. The activities and guides should be customised to meet the development needs of the WELL practitioner and the program needs provided in the WELL application.

### Feedback from Trials of Professional Development Activities
Professional development activities have been trialed at WELL Practitioner Network meetings in Victoria; The Learning Workshop, Cairns (to induct a new WELL practitioner to a remote WELL project); with two experienced practitioners at Chisholm Institute of TAFE, Victoria and with TAFE and private providers in Sydney. Approximately 20 practitioners and coordinators have reviewed activities. Feedback on the trials is summarised below and the evaluation questions are available in the Appendices.
The majority of activities received either a ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ feedback on their effectiveness. Where feedback was less positive – ‘not sure’ or ‘disagree’ – the comments indicated that the activity directions needed to be clearer. In most cases, those activities were trialed on another occasion after the recommended changes had been made.

Some discussion was also generated about the use of the activities with new and experienced WELL practitioners. While all of the activities were considered useful for new practitioners some participants felt that the activities could also be useful for ‘refreshing’ experienced WELL practitioners.

Comments

Trial participants provided the following comments.

‘Balance of Power: The WELL practitioner thought that the diagram on [the Learner as the central focus] should be sighted within the larger framework of the workplace as the model is also framed by the constraints of the workplace. The diagram provided a useful tool for generating discussion about the balance of power in the workplace especially the role/power of stakeholders. Diagram [of different stakeholders - on the next page] generated good discussion surrounding what is and what should be. Practitioner thought it should be a bottom up or learner centered model but that the reality for teachers/RTOs is top down model – often focused on the requirements of DEEWR, AQTF and ACSF.’

‘Practitioner’s Role questions generated useful discussion. Provided a springboard to discuss the complex role of and EBT, challenges, workplace constraints, revisit balance of power issues and compare with campus based training.’

‘Theory in Action Be useful to revisit this section (and others) after some experience is gained.’

‘Collaborative Practice: From my perspective it generated a useful discussion about the ways in which collaborative relationships could be initiated and developed. The practitioner would have preferred examples of how RTOs and WELL practitioners had built those relationships.’

General comments on the induction process included:

The Learning Workshop

‘A useful Induction tool that will elevate discussion, encourage reflection and prevent the practitioner induction from centering on purely organisational and procedural issues.

‘It also has application as professional development tool to cause experienced teachers to reflect on own practice at an intellectual rather than practical level.’

Sydney Trial 4: Carla Dawson, Curriculum Development Coordinator, LLNP, MTC Training Solutions

‘I guess the only thing that seems lacking to me – and this may have been covered in sections trialed by other groups – is the more practical, on-the-ground sort of advice and suggestions. I think the scenarios would allow for this to be explored to some extent and I like that section very much. And if a mentoring relationship is possible, then that would probably address any concerns in this area. It’s just that the DVD interviews didn’t really go into the day-to-day WELL practitioner experience as much as I had expected and I wondered if an inexperienced WELL teacher without a mentor might not feel the same way.’
These two comments contrast what can happen when an induction activity is removed from a real project. The Learning Workshop used four activities with a new WELL practitioner who was starting her first WELL program the following week. The Sydney trials were conducted as trials. One of the Sydney trials used a case study drawn from the Australian WELL Practitioners Network website. In that trial the case study enabled the participants to look at what might occur on the ground and day-to-day, and received better feedback than the trial where there was no case study.

Supporting Induction Practices

Some RTOs are able to include induction activities in their projects because the logistics of the project require it for success – thus providers working in rural and remote settings need to spend a lot of time ‘upfront’ to ensure the best use is made of the practitioner’s time onsite. This is especially important for fly-in-fly-out projects. However, several other participants in the trials noted that it is hard to provide a good induction because the funding is not available. Practitioners, then, need to explore how to use the funding to support new practitioners and should clarify the policy with their State WELL contact officers.

RTOs provide the standard organisational induction for all staff and it is then up to the unit to induct the new staff member to their particular area. One practitioner commented that, basically, WELL practitioners do that for themselves when they introduce themselves to a new work site. Several felt that funding should be provided to ensure an appropriate induction was carried out for each project whether or not the practitioner was new or experienced. Similarly, the WELL 2006 Evaluation - Study of WELL Projects Final report (2006) recommended that DEST (Department of Education, Science and Technology) provide more support for the professional development of WELL practitioners.
Practice and Theory

The review conducted into the WELL program (KPMG, 2006) brushed lightly over the experiences of WELL practitioners by not investigating how they contributed to the success of WELL programs. It noted that WELL trainers were valued for their patience and ability to assist learners. When looking into language and literacy provision in the workplace there has been little space for examining the practitioners’ experience as the focus has been on the theoretical, political and cultural nature of providing training in the workplace. The majority of material concerned with capacity building for practitioners has been about VET and workplace trainers. Three notable exceptions are:

- ‘WELL Professional Development Guide: Planning an effective WELL training project and preparing a successful WELL training application’ (2010)

These provide a link between the macro level considerations of stakeholders and funding constraints, and the intermediate level of meeting the needs of a specific project. This project provides a closer look at the micro level to reveal WELL practitioners’ thoughts and experiences of providing WELL training.

The following discussion seeks to blend the points made by the practitioners with ideas and strategies highlighted in research and discussion on workplace training. The literature review supporting the 2006 research report into the professional development needs of WELL practitioners, is still very relevant for this project – not a lot has changed for WELL practitioners. However, there have been changes in the policy environment since 2009 and this project comes at a time when LLN skills are becoming a core topic for vocational education and training along with employability skills.

Understanding how WELL practitioners, most often coming from an education and qualification background, learn to work with industry to integrate LLN into vocational learning may provide not only strategies for attracting new WELL practitioners but for assisting VET trainers to integrate LLN into their practice. The practitioners featured in this report go someway to meeting the need expressed by Wickert and McGurk (2005)

‘Nonetheless, the success of industry or enterprise-based teachers is one model to learn from, although it is reported that these educators sometimes find it hard to move away from a conventional teaching space. There are also many examples of creative teaching in community adult education settings although, again, a traditional delivery model continues to dominate. One respondent despaired of what he called the literacy ‘brick wall’, namely the difficulty of getting teachers out of the classroom and working in partnerships in the community with open minds about the possibilities therein.’

Initially, WELL practitioners do find it hard to move from the classroom to the workplace – be it in a community or commercial setting. The information provided by the WELL practitioners below offers ideas on how the transition could be supported.
The Practitioners

A question this project wanted to resolve was what kept people in WELL delivery when almost everyone talks about its challenges. The practitioners were asked about their personal and professional reasons for working in WELL.

‘...and it’s about empowering people. You know, you see someone that’s been put in a job, they haven’t got the skills for that job and you’re actually giving them the skills to do that job, so I’ve been working with some team leaders, the team leaders haven’t had any training. They come off the factory floor and there they are using people-skills, using problem solving skills. Last year I gave them the skills, this year I’m working with them and we’re just having a meeting, sitting down having a relaxed talk about how things have gone this week and what they could have done differently. Very empowering.’

Carla Oetjjen, Acting Workplace Consultant, SWSI TAFE, NSW

Buzz

The centrality of language, literacy and numeracy skills to employees’ progress at work is, in reality, no different to the importance of those skills to other learners. The WELL practitioners, however, have the satisfaction of seeing the learners use their new skills almost immediately.

The results that remain with WELL practitioners are the further impacts on learners’ lives. The practitioners were effusive about the buzz they get from working in WELL. Their comments fall within three areas: social justice, and personal and professional satisfaction. These divisions are largely arbitrary as the practitioners’ experiences and feelings merge across the boundaries – the personal and professional satisfactions are often about the social justice impact of their work.

These include the satisfaction of seeing people apply newly learnt skills at work and of taking the skills home with them, as noted by Bonnie Yeatman, in the Northern Territory (DVD-Buzz).

The practitioners can also see their work extending beyond the learners they are working with directly. As noted by Jane Hall, (DVD-Buzz), when responding to a CEO’s question about whether or not the employees understood his monthly update on company progress and she pointed out that most would not have understood it. She was able to work with him so that the message was appropriate for the audience. This contributes to the company and the employees. The practitioner, to ensure that the benefits of the communication training provided for the employees would extend beyond their immediate work team, needed to move outside the program specifics to address a significant channel of communication. By assisting the CEO in understanding the needs of his audience she not only improved understanding of the messages but also of the company.

The learners’ stories are not about their ability to double their output as a result of the training. Rather the practitioners talk about the take aways – the skills the learners feel they can share with others, most notably their families and communities, the improvements in interpersonal understanding as a result of training with colleagues and the ability to share ideas and skills with colleagues – share knowledge and communicate to solve problems. These lead to the outcomes so often cited in WELL training applications – increased confidence to participate in the workplace, reductions in waste, absenteeism, and safety incidents, and the improvements in quality and productivity. These latter outcomes might more accurately be ascribed to the communication training provided by WELL practitioners, enabling employees to become fully engaged learners in the workplace – an aspect of workplace pedagogy referred to by Billett, 2000.
Support

The practitioners draw upon a wide range of supports. The ability to support each other relates most particularly to how the practitioners liaise with all stakeholders. Stakeholders include a wide circle of influential agencies and people: DEEWR, unions, their own RTO, and the managers, supervisors and employees of the client company. How these various supports are developed will have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the program.

Colleagues are important supports for practitioners even though they may not interact frequently. Most of the practitioners referred to more experienced colleagues guiding or mentoring them as they first went into WELL delivery.

The methods of support involved ready access to more experienced colleagues who could provide resources, advice on how to negotiate a site issue or just calm anxieties or assist by clarifying ideas. Often the guidance focuses on working at the confluence of multiple interest groups while still being able to provide the outcomes originally set for the program.

In the workplace, other needs may replace the need for learning. Suzanne Blakemore (DVD- Induction, Working with the company) notes that practitioners new to WELL must accept that they ‘don’t have ownership of the learning environment.’ Employees can make choices about attending WELL training and sometimes it is based upon the practitioners’ performance.

Learning in the workplace is a social activity. Drawing on learners’ experiences of their work, the workplace and the product/service they are providing give the practitioner a great deal of material to work with. More importantly it engages directly with the learners’ skills and knowledge in an area where the practitioner becomes the learner.

Theories of learning as a social activity (Lave and Wegner, 2007; Billett, 2000) note the impact of the powerful influences in the environment in which learning occurs. The WELL practitioners noted the importance of establishing a close working relationship before any delivery is attempted. This rapport building involves everyone from the start of the program. It is an integral part of not only establishing clear learning goals but of promoting the project to the most influential people onsite – managers and supervisors who will need to release employees to attend training. Without this work, the practitioner may not have any students at all. When the students do come, the practitioner not only has to address the same needs as a classroom-based practitioner but must also be aware of the learner’s sensitivity as a ‘consumer’ of learning.

‘There are a lot of people working in industry who didn’t enjoy their earlier education or didn’t have much. And so to have the opportunity to have education they also have the pressures of the work and if they’re leaving [the line] and leaving their team mates. So they have to make sure, they have to know that the training is worthwhile. If it’s just adding another pressure and they’re not learning anything, they’re not enjoying it. They don’t feel like they’re achieving anything, they’re not going to want to come back. Otherwise there may be more pressure from production.’

Jane Hall, WELL Practitioner, Chisholm Institute of TAFE, Victoria

‘I’ve learnt more since I’ve come back into WELL after a couple of years off than I’ve learnt in the last 13 years if I had just been in a classroom in terms of what’s happening in the country in VET and what’s happening in the future, … and what the trends are and where there’s skill-shortages. I have a language now I didn’t have before, and WELL’s enabled me to professionally develop myself. In fact in a way that was unavailable to me when I was in a classroom.’

Maxine Tomlin, WELL Practitioner, Central TAFE, Perth
For the practitioners, working closely with the learners provides critical support at a very immediate level for the program. This is relevant for practitioners entering new workplaces for the first time when they can feel out of their depth (Suzanne Blakemore, DVD-Induction, Practitioner Skills).

Recognition of the adult status of the learners is a critical point in working successfully on site. The learners have valuable knowledge the practitioner can draw on to support the LLN learning. (Jane Hall, DVD-Induction-Practitioner Skills). This support is critical when working in remote indigenous communities where the practitioner must be aware that they are entering someone else’s community (Cathrena McRae, Cairns; Tahlia Scheermijer, Darwin; DVD-Support).

‘...our students, they're telling me what works and what doesn't work and we're involved, at the moment, with working with some, developing resources in English as well as in Gupapuyngu. So we will use those resources back as WELL resources in terms of using them.... So it's a collaborative thing. I actually think they're some of my best guides about what works and what doesn't work and I just need my knowledge of the framework outside to support that.’

Shirley Brown, Anhem Land Progress Association, Darwin

Practitioners feel there are many similarities between teaching in the workplace and in the classroom. However, there are differences that need to be recognised for workplace delivery to be effective for the learner (an employee) and the institute (the company). Students within an institute setting may be employees, but not of an RTO or a company that is hosting the delivery. The students may bring their work experience into the classroom but the teacher/trainer is not accountable to the employer for the effectiveness of that learning – that is, for the learner to apply it appropriately at work. The first few classroom sessions may be spent developing some rapport between students to facilitate whole and small group work. Their students may have some absences but there will always be a significant number of people in the room. The workplace has some significant differences here.

Adult learners at work are influenced by their responsibilities to their workplace, their colleagues and their own sense of purpose in being at work. Unless the delivery addresses the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of the participants, the training project will quickly lose momentum.

Transfer The practitioners responded quite differently about the ability to transfer methodology and material between the workplace and the traditional classroom. Several have been able to use their workplace experience to lend credibility to their vocational or pre-employment training in the classroom. For some their workplace experience encourages them to consider all delivery a ‘two-way street’- giving learners more say in what and how they learn. This is the type of transfer many of the practitioners felt they could take back to classroom delivery. Some are disinclined to return to the classroom. In the workplace they can see real and immediate outcomes from their delivery. They feel there is a disconnect between what they do and see in classroom delivery. There was an impression that there would be constraints on what could be taught – being more curriculum driven than in WELL – and that there would be less choice on the materials used because there would be a need to use those aligned to specific outcomes.

**Induction**

There is a close correlation between the skills and knowledge listed by the practitioners and those in the 2009 *Professional Development Guide for WELL Practitioners*. This indicates that the guide would be a valuable tool for the professional development of WELL practitioners. The activities developed with this project enliven the points raised in the Guide and enable people to engage in discussion about their practice.

In providing their ideas on induction the WELL practitioners clearly assumed the new practitioner would have suitable teaching or training qualifications. The current induction practices would seem to emphasise skills for client liaison and administration. As Shirley Brown (DVD-Induction, Practitioner Skills) notes, an institute-based trainer may not know what a workplace is really like until they start working on a WELL site.

> ‘When we interview them … we explain fairly clearly what that role might be and the kind of difficulties and successes they might experience. So you’ve got the whole issue of … you teach something, someone is probably going to use it the next moment or the next day so it’s that direct learning that you may not have had in conventional classrooms so that’s very fulfilling for teachers. But they need to have that independent skill-set of being able to go out and make things happen. I think that’s the key difference between perhaps traditional classroom teaching and the sort of work we do. You actually have to problem-solve, be flexible, and make it happen. If this doesn’t work then you go and do something else. You just maximise all the opportunities that you get. … so I guess they’re the sort of challenges. But the people who have applied for jobs with us, they are looking for that adventure.’

* Cathrena McRae, The Learning Workshop, Cairns

Underlining the practitioners’ stories is the theme of the diverse skill set needed to work effectively in industry. It is a skill set that the practitioners felt would be hard to acquire. The same concerns arise in Margaret McHugh’s (2011) discussion of the Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills (CAVSS). This is a model that began in Western Australia to team language and literacy specialist teachers with vocational teachers to work with students – either as a ‘tag team’ or together. By putting the LLN teacher in with the whole class, assistance is provided to all students, not just those identified as needing assistance, and the stigma of needing help is avoided. This meets one of the principles of CAVSS, that it is the normality principle – the extra teaching help is not unusual in vocational learning. McHugh highlights the challenge for the LLN teacher to become knowledgeable, all be it in a secondary role to the VET teacher, in the technical material. The point of this refers the second principle McHugh raises – relevance.

> ‘The relevance principle means that only the cognitive and communication skills that are used in the industry context are taught. It is sometimes difficult for literacy and numeracy teachers, who have worked exclusively in the education industry by virtue of their job roles in schools and adult education programmes, to appreciate the communication styles, social pragmatics, values, key concepts and conceptual tools that are distinctive to each industry.’ (Pg 14)

This difficulty did not entirely present itself in the WELL practitioners’ stories. Rather, it appears that the availability of realia in the vocational setting and the opportunity for learners to apply what they have learnt almost immediately is highly prized by the practitioners. Understanding the social pragmatics and values of the industry (the company) are two features that WELL practitioners highlighted as being important for establishing a successful program. The practitioners have a variety of sources to assist with this information – some can refer to vocational lecturers within their own RTO and all can draw on the workplace itself to inform them. Thus practitioners note the amount of time they spend talking to managers, being trained in the work processes and in getting to know all of the knowledgeable and influential people in a workplace. The WELL program provides a model for integrating LLN and vocational...
skills in the workplace. WELL practitioners can provide a role model for other teaching practitioners on how to do this effectively, as an educator.

McHugh also notes the difficulty LLN teachers have to ‘fit in with the vocational group’. A well run CAVSS program will make the pairing of the vocational and LLN teachers a mutually agreed upon arrangement. Some WELL providers are able to link vocational experts with their WELL practitioners providing a source of technical expertise that is not reliant upon the company. On occasions the WELL practitioners have been asked to provide training within their institute because of their workplace knowledge combined with their LLN skills.

As with CAVSS teachers, WELL practitioners need to work out how to bring their expertise into a vocational setting without trying to turn it into a language, literacy or numeracy classroom. The workplace is not adult basic education. However, several of the WELL practitioners felt that the skills they had developed in classroom delivery had been supportive of the skills they needed in the workplace. Equally, they could see that the workplace experience could add credibility to their classroom programs when they returned to the institute.

**Careers**

Several different methods were described for attracting new people to WELL. These included advertising, running information sessions and even using institute functions to identify people who looked like they might enjoy working in WELL. But even if the slightly clandestine strategies work and an institute-based trainer is curious about WELL, they are often restricted by their workloads and RTO business models from participating. Many practitioners also commented that people did not know what they were talking about when they described themselves as WELL practitioners.

McHugh (2011) in her summary of the origins of CAVSS notes that the drivers for it have not changed since its inception in the late 1990’s. One of these is:

*The specialist literacy and numeracy workforce has atrophied, in part because market forces have undermined pay and conditions and new entrants are discouraged.*

She also notes that there is little provision to train VET trainers to teach the communication skills needed to integrate LLN support into vocational training. This, however, may be gradually countered if current and new VET trainers take up the new post-graduate qualifications in the TAE Training Package. Her point on funding levels, however, remains an issue for this to happen and for the appropriate induction of new WELL practitioners.

An additional hurdle for attracting new practitioners is the project-based nature of the work resulting in practitioners having to learn to manage their workload to ensure they stay in work full time. As one practitioner noted, being a WELL practitioner is almost like running a small business.

Black and Yasukawa (2010) in discussing the development of the foundation skills strategy highlight the importance of social capital as an aspect of language and literacy provision. WELL is a small but significant example where LLN provision contributes directly in enabling employees to engage more fully in the workplace, and at home. The practitioners’ stories contained short profiles of employees who had developed new levels of confidence and improved relations with others by owning their LLN skill needs and surmounting them. (Refer to - DVD-Who is the WELL Learner?) Black and Yasukawa note, however, that if partnerships between LLN and VET practitioners are going to happen some investment needs to be made to support it. While Black and Yasukawa were referring programs other than WELL, the practitioners noted that to enable RTOs to appropriately induct and support new WELL practitioners funding support would be needed. They felt that this could be a feature of the WELL funding model. The impression is, however, that DEEWR will not support this. Black and Yasukawa refer to the need for new federal funding to support the integration of literacy and numeracy into VET courses.
Professional development is a common issue for VET practitioners (Mitchell, 2009) and literacy and numeracy teachers (Black & Yasukawa, 2010). Black and Yasukawa point out the steady demise of professional development support for literacy and numeracy teachers, and note that the teachers are not finding a connection with emerging theory. In his 2009 study Mitchell notes that VET practitioners also experience a sense of not having the bulk of their professional development needs met. This suggests that for LLN to be successfully integrated into vocational training and for WELL providers to bring in new practitioners, significant Government planning and funding is needed. The Foundation Skills Strategy may be one way of achieving this. Many of the concerns listed above may also be resolved with the release of *Skills for prosperity – a roadmap for VET* (2011) which includes a discussion on strategies to build the skills of the VET workforce.

**Induction Activities**

In 2006 Berghella, Molenaar and Wyse noted the following:

‘To ensure that practitioners are able to critically analyse their own practice to meet the demands of language, literacy and numeracy delivery within the workplace, appropriate learning opportunities need to be created both prior to entry to the field and as on-going professional development to support the use of appropriate methodologies in response to new and emerging literacies.’

The practitioners interviewed in this project are saying just this, with one exception. They do not note ‘literacies’ as the focal point for the learning and on-going professional development. Their main concern appears to be the skills for entering, liaising and working with the workplace. It may be that the practitioners are losing focus on the background of their primary skill set – the broad application of literacies across all aspects of people’s lives.

As a result of the data provided by the WELL practitioners, several induction activities have been included with this report. Aside from the WELL professional guides noted earlier, there is very little available to guide the development of workplace practitioners coming from an educational background – in contrast to vocational trainers who come directly from an industry background. Nor is there a lot of material available on the methodological requirements for workplace delivery, although this may change as the Foundation Skills strategy takes shape.

Research tends to look at learning at work, the style of learning, the workplace affordances for learning and the ability to transfer learning. The focal point of these discussions is the development of vocational and employability skills. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research website [http://www.adultliteracyresource.edu.au/IntegrationOfLanguageLiteracyAndNumeracyWithinVET](http://www.adultliteracyresource.edu.au/IntegrationOfLanguageLiteracyAndNumeracyWithinVET) offers, perhaps, the best link to LLN in the workplace for adults.

Increasingly there are materials available that highlight the LLN skills embedded in training packages. These materials have been prepared by various Industry Skill Councils to support workplace trainers. These resources guide trainers and assessors to integrate LLN skills in delivery and assessment. These resources go some way to guiding practitioners in utilising workplace discourses to provide language, literacy and numeracy skill development.

Waterhouse and Virgona (2004) note that VET practitioners, when working within highly standardized industries, must be aware of the tendency for the standards to restrict employees’ level of engagement in the decision making responsibilities of their roles. Waterhouse and Virgona feel the practitioner has a role to play in enabling employees to learn to take up a more rounded role in the workplace:
• The VET system is challenged to serve the broad needs of individuals, the community and the economy, and resist the narrowing of literacy and generic skills for company requirements. To avoid an undue focus on company learning agendas, off-site training can provide a space to address broader educational issues beyond the immediate employer interests.

• ‘Transferability’, that is, the generic literacy and communication skills which workers can then translate to other workplaces, should be regarded as a significant generic skill requirement, one to which trainers should give more prominence.

• To deliver holistic training by means of training packages, trainers appear to need a higher level of basic education than the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. They also need continuing professional development.

While Waterhouse and Virgona are concerned that training in highly regulated industries, such as aged care and call centres, neglects the critical literacy skills to enable employees to work ‘smart’, they also note what it means for VET practitioners professional development.

Within the range of responses from the WELL practitioners those of more recent arrival to the program express their concerns about meeting the companies needs. They express themselves in words of rules and maxims - ‘I think if you’re just a teacher and you can’t relate to management and do what they want to—achieve what they want to achieve, then it’s not going to work. If you’re so focused on what you want to deliver’. In contrast, the more experienced WELL practitioners refer to anecdotes of learners’ who have made impressive changes to their skills. In general, these practitioners are also less adamant about how to manage yourself in the workplace. WELL practitioners are able to demonstrate the intricacies of applying broad literacy development support in industry training but do need a process for maintaining the dialogue about the opposing forces that impact on their practice.

Some WELL Practitioners are looking for guides to ensure they know what they have to do before they actually begin work, as occurs in highly regulated work environments. This is demonstrated most clearly by the following two comments:

‘It’s not just teaching but it’s project managing. You need to be able to manage the project and be able to work with the management in the workplace. I think if you’re just a teacher and you can’t relate to management and do what they want to—achieve what they want to achieve, then it’s not going to work. If you’re so focused on what you want to deliver. I have meetings every week with management where I work at the moment and yeah, it’s just a really easy rapport and so that transfers over into training. And people I think are keen to come to training because they know that what I’m speaking isn’t from myself; it’s from management. They know that I’ve spent a lot of time with management and this is what management wants them to learn so I think that’s a bonus as well. I think if I didn’t have people skills I wouldn’t be able to transfer management knowledge to workers.’

‘If you’re a good teacher you just create an environment where people teach themselves – that’s the essence of what we do.’

The first practitioner had been teaching in WELL for twelve months at the time of the interview. Her previous background had been as a trade teacher and professional. The second practitioner had been teaching in WELL for over ten years and comes from a teaching background and qualifications. As with other fairly new WELL practitioners, the new practitioner above wanted to find a manual that would enable her to understand how to deliver WELL in different industries.
'It’s been a really difficult year, really difficult. While I like the fact that it’s really contextualised I’d really like a manual. I’d like to be able to grab a manual for Aged Care that says this is how you do WELL training but there is no manual. Or for Food Processing; this is how you do it. That it’s been left up to the teachers to design their own training. I enjoy designing my training but probably for every hour that I’m in the workplace, at the moment I’m spending one to two hours in my own time preparing resources.'

The plea from this practitioner for a manual is not unusual among educators of all persuasions and has become a greater issue as the workforce has been casualised. The purpose of mentoring and providing a sound theoretical background for practice is to free practitioners from manuals or rules that restrict their ability to address the LLN needs of learners as they appear in each new site.

Several practitioners noted the impediments to providing substantial support and mentoring to new WELL practitioners. Billett (2000) notes three factors that comprise ‘workplace pedagogy’. These apply to WELL practitioners as much as they do to the employees in Billett’s research.

‘Three key elements of a workplace pedagogy have been identified in these discussions. The first is the intentional structuring of practice and the provision of guidance to supplement the contributions provided freely and ‘unintentionally’ through engagement in everyday work activities. The second is to acknowledge the consequences of different kinds of workplace affordances. How individuals are permitted to participate in workplace activities, the kind of activities they are able to participate in and support they are afforded are central to the quality of their learning. The invitational quality or affordance of the workplace subsumes the first point. The third element emphasises that how individuals elect to engage in workplace activities and utilise the guidance that is afforded them by the workplace will ultimately determine what they learn. Effortful and full-bodied engagement is required by individuals to develop vocational rather than merely situationally specific knowledge. However, the source of this engagement is located in relations between the workplace’s affordance and individuals’ interest.’ (pg 7)

The activities in this project encourage the WELL coordinator/manager to structure practice and guidance for the WELL practitioner (new or experienced) and to customise this to the constraints of the RTO and the client in the WELL project. The development of the practitioner’s interest in engaging with learning about WELL delivery might largely sit with how well they are supported in establishing their project with the client company and how well they understand the needs for training from the client company’s point of view. Equally, Billett’s comments could easily be used to analyse how the client company provides for learning at work – the workplace affordances. Billet notes that a workplace pedagogy needs to take into account how a workplace enables workers to learn new tasks. Some workers never learn more than is required for their immediate role. At other times, some workers may be given some access to new tasks/new learning opportunities. Whether or not a worker can access learning has much to do with the way the workplace afford learning. Billets’ comments are as relevant for the new WELL practitioner as they are a worker in a client company.
Implications

Resourcing

- Support for induction is needed, whether as a separate source of funding for RTOs who are WELL providers or within project funding. Induction is the main method for assisting practitioners to make the transfer from classroom-based delivery to WELL delivery. It can enable them to see the similarities between the two delivery environments, and to anticipate and plan for the differences. As a method for assisting transfer of learning, induction with an experienced WELL practitioner is seen as an invaluable tool.

- Funding to maintain and encourage participation in a community of practice could also support WELL practitioners’ skill development. The diversity of environments in which WELL is provided offers a greater source of skill and knowledge sharing than is currently available. While the framework for delivery is the same across Australia, the variety of delivery environments evoke different responses to issues. These could offer valuable support for skill building and sharing in activities such as moderation, development of resources, and problem solving.

- Additional resources, such as interactive communication via wikis or blogs, are needed to improve communication between WELL practitioners across Australia. Rural and remote WELL practitioners did not make up a large percentage of respondents in this project. Nonetheless, there is a real sense that resourcing is focussed on the southern states The Australian WELL Practitioners’ Network and National Conferences are considered to be good sources for professional development and networking but some additional support is needed to reach all practitioners.

Registered Training Organisations

- Organisational culture and the ability to understand knowledge management have a direct impact on how WELL practitioners view themselves as employees. In some instances the practitioners in this project could describe how they worked across discipline boundaries, showcasing their work and inviting other practitioners to accompany them on WELL programs. However, most of the WELL practitioners in this project did not refer to the larger organisation when discussing induction or recruitment strategies.

Cross training and team teaching between practitioners and institute staff needs systematic organisational planning. With the increased emphasis on foundation skills and the responsibility of every trainer for the LLN skill development of their students, WELL practitioners could provide invaluable collegial support in team teaching or specialist teaching within programs for non-WELL practitioners. Equally, the WELL practitioners are in need of technical support from trainers who understand trade and service skills, and the demands of vocational education. Skills for prosperity- a roadmap for VET (2011) provides an opportunity for RTOs to work with the Government to build this capacity for their workforce.

At the state funding level, the Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills (CAVSS) is a delivery model that can support the skill development of institute-based LLN teachers to become proficient in integrating LLN skills into vocational training. The WELL practitioners’ skill set is not a direct equivalent of a CAVSS teacher, however, together they can provide the framework for improving the level of discussion about LLN in VET skills with VET teachers.
Not all training organisations find it possible to communicate and coordinate between delivery areas. In these circumstances the management of WELL practitioners’ knowledge and experience can be lost as the employment patterns for WELL do not fit readily into the traditional delivery of training institutes. When a WELL program is complete, the WELL practitioner is often looking for work.

As WELL is a project-based program, RTOs need to help practitioners manage their workloads so they can stay available for projects as they arise. This may be more of an issue where States allow for funding across the year as this means that practitioners ‘run out’ of work mid-term and mid-semester when job opportunities are scarce. Few practitioners are in a position to chance weeks or months of light or no employment waiting for the next WELL project to be funded.

Promotion of WELL – of the program and the practitioners’ skills – is needed and may provide a valuable driver for other educational sectors to appreciate the value of learning at work and of integrating LLN into vocational training. With the development of National Foundation Skills Strategy many institute-based teachers and trainers are faced with improving the provision of LLN support strategies in their delivery. It is not easily understood (often called ‘dumbing down’) but could be easily demonstrated and supported by the strategic use of WELL practitioners across curriculum areas. However, RTOs need some assistance in promoting and supporting cross faculty work.
References

Berghella, T, Molenaar, J and Wyse, L (2006), The professional development requirements of WELL programme practitioners: Support documents, NCVER, Australia


Innovation and Business Skills Australia, (2011) VET workforce skills in language, literacy and numeracy.


McHugh M. (2011) Crossing the academic-vocational divide, fine print, Vol 34, No 1, VALBEC Victoria, pp 12 – 16


Skills Australia (2011) Skills for prosperity – a roadmap for vocational education and training, Commonwealth of Australia

Wickert, R and McGuirk J (2005) Integrating literacies Using partnerships to build literacy capabilities in communities, NCVER, Australia

Appendices

The following are provided as background to ‘Not Your Usual Practice: Educational Voices in the Workplace’.

Please acknowledge the source.

Project forms:

1. Expression of Interest
2. Practitioner Profile
3. Interview Questions
4. Interview Evaluation
5. Trial Invitation
6. Trial Evaluation
7. Induction Evaluation
Appendix 1: Expression of Interest

Dear Colleagues,

You are invited to participate in 'Educational Voices in the Workplace', a strategic project funded by DEEWR, that is recording WELL practitioners’ teaching experience.

As we visit each State and Territory we hope to collect up to 18 interviews for a DVD that can be used by RTOs to support recruitment and induction of WELL practitioners. We would like to invite practitioners to be interviewed by one the project team for approximately 30 – 45 minutes.

Through practitioners’ thoughts and experience this project will seek to provide:

- Case studies of practitioners working together, demonstrating effective sharing of ideas and methodology
- A blog on the WELL Practitioners Network to open communication across the country
- Processes for RTOs to transfer learning gained through WELL delivery to learning in the organisation
- Ideas on how to attract more trainers and teachers to the program

Case studies will be drawn from the interviews. Each person who is interviewed will be sent a transcript to review. On the transcript we will indicate the passages that seem most appropriate and ask your permission to use that information on the DVD and the final written report.

The Blog will be available for any WELL practitioner but will, initially, follow the discussion points raised by you. Practitioners who can’t participate in the interviews are encouraged to join in via the Blog. The Blog is now open, go to www.eduvoices.wordpress.com.

Ideas for recruitment and induction will be trialled in three states and will involve urban, rural and remote RTOs. The trials will help refine the ideas you provide on how professional skills developed in WELL programs might be transferred to RTO-based delivery.

Recruitment and induction activities will also be developed based upon your information and feedback. The results of the interviews, trials and feedback will appear in the final report that will be available as a product of the strategic project.

As the project leader, I am working with John Molenaar, Manufacturing Learning Victoria, and Katrina Hegarty, previous Victorian State WELL Coordinator, on this project. I have worked as a WELL practitioner in Victoria for several years before becoming a coordinator and then manager of WELL programs. I am currently working as a consultant in my own business, Fiveways Training Support.

John or I will be in your State or Territory over 2010 – 2011. We would be happy to arrange interview times that best fit the flow of work in your region. Unfortunately, we can only make one visit to each location.

An Expression of Interest form is attached.
Workplace English Language and Literacy

Educational Voices in the Workplace
Practitioners’ sharing knowledge and experience

Date: TBA –  
Venue: TBA –

NOTE: options for including regional and remote practitioners via teleconferencing will be investigated

Expression of Interest

Please complete and email back to:

I would like to participate in an interview for this project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact Details:</td>
<td>Phone</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Email</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Best times to meet</strong></td>
<td>Please indicate the meeting processes that best suit your work commitments – days of the week, best weeks in a term/semester, etc. I will try to accommodate as many people as possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Questions          | Please ask me any questions you have about this. I will respond as soon as possible. |

Thank you – We look forward to working with you.
Appendix 2: Practitioner Profile

Educational Voices in the Workplace

Thank you for participating in this interview. To help us with our report please complete the following information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Years teaching in WELL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industries in which you have taught</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTO – if suitable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you done any non-WELL teaching over the last two years?</td>
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</table>
Appendix 3: Interview Questions

1. **Buzz** - Where’s the buzz in WELL training for you personally and professionally?

2. **Support that works** - What types of support do you access for WELL? For instance, how do you work with the local or trade experts in your companies? What specific skills have you learnt from other WELL practitioners?

3. **Migration** – How would you use your skills if you did have to return to classroom delivery? Is there any thing about your workplace skills/experience you think could be effectively shared with other teachers/trainers?

4. **For a new WELL practitioner** - Induction can be an effective tool. What are the key things that have assisted you to develop as a WELL practitioner? If you could change any of it, what would it be?

5. **Career options** - How did you become aware of WELL as a career? How can we attract more people into WELL as a career?
**Appendix 4: Interview Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Voices in the Workplace</th>
<th>Interview Evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewer:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Your name (optional)</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was given time to resolve any questions I had about how my information would be used.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The questions allowed me to develop my ideas based upon my experience and knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This interview has helped me to think through some issues I have with WELL training.</td>
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<td>I felt that the interviewer was listening to me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessing the blog will be a good way of Keeping up with the project discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The process for reviewing what I have said was clear to me – transcripts, use of information on the blog and in the report.</td>
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<td>I feel I can follow-up with any of the project leaders if I have any questions later on.</td>
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<td>Is there anything that should or should not be included in the interview?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How can the interview process be improved?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Comments:</strong></td>
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</table>

*Thank you for participating in the interview stage of this project.*

*Your transcript should reach you by email within a fortnight of this series of interviews being completed. Should there be a delay, Rhonda will let you know.*

*Go to [www.eduvoices.wordpress.com](http://www.eduvoices.wordpress.com) to talk to other WELL practitioners in this project.*
Appendix 5: Trial Invitation

Invitation

INDUCTION ACTIVITIES FOR WELL PRACTITIONERS

Not Your Usual Practice: Educational Voices in the Workplace

Introduction

The WELL strategic project, Educational Voices in the Workplace, was funded by DEEWR to talk to WELL practitioners about their experiences. Over the last ten months, WELL practitioners from around Australia have described their motivation for working in WELL delivery, the support they use, how they compare methodology between the workplace and the classroom, and what they think is required to help new practitioners ‘learn’ to deliver in the workplace.

Twenty-eight people were interviewed, including a panel discussion at the National WELL conference in Melbourne last November. As a result of those interviews trial induction activities have been developed. The activities include extracts from the interviews.

To complete the project trials of the materials are being carried out in three separate locations. Three have been completed so far – one for a provider in a remote setting and two with experienced WELL practitioners in an urban setting. A fourth trial is being provided to broaden the range of feedback.

With this trial we hope to bring together a range of practitioners – experienced and new to WELL – to work together on the activities.

The feedback we receive will influence the completion of the DVD and the final report.

Please use the table on the next page to:

• select the day/s that best suit you
• let us know what time of day best suits you
• if you have any dietary requirements

There is some capacity to cover travel costs – please let me know at the email address below.
Please complete and email back to:

I would like to participate in the trial of the DVD and induction activities.

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
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**Contact Details:**
- Phone
- Email
- Other:

*Please indicate which day and time best suits you by circling your choice*

**Thursday July 14th**

<table>
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<th>Time</th>
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<td>10 am</td>
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**Dietary Needs**

*Please let us know your dietary preferences:*
- Vegetarian
- Food Intolerances – gluten, lactose, nuts …
- Halal
- Kosher
- Other

**Questions**

*Please ask me any questions you have about this. I will respond as soon as possible.*

Thank you – I look forward to working with you, Rhonda
**Appendix 6: Trial Evaluation**

**Educational Voices in the Workplace**

**Trial Evaluation**

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<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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The topics were suitable for inducting a new WELL practitioner.

**Balance of Power** enabled me to discuss my role in the workplace in relation to making decisions about delivery.

**Theory in Action** helped me to describe my own theory of adult learning and to identify the things I would expect to see when adults learn successfully.

**Collaborative Practice** allowed us to explore the who, what, when and how of working with different people in a/the project.

The **Mentoring** activity resulted in a plan for working with another colleague that will help the practitioner work in WELL.

**What are they on about?** Helped me to ‘think’ myself into the role by using other practitioners’ experience and advice.

**Resources** made sure that a range of resource sites were identified and linked to how I could use them in a/the project.

**Mapping Practitioners’ Skills** helped to identify skills/knowledge I can bring to the WELL delivery and to look at skills I need to develop.

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This represents a collation of all the evaluation questions used across the four trials of the material.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Scenarios</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>helped us to explore how a client company could misunderstand a WELL practitioner’s role.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Charting a Course</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>was useful for planning to meet milestones and for raising other project management issues.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>The DVD</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>extracts were clear and easy to follow.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>The duration</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>of the DVD extracts was long enough to follow the speaker’s ideas.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Other comments about the DVD</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These activities would be useful for follow up discussions after I have started at the workplace.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>There should be more induction activities.</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Please list any other induction activities you think should be developed for this resource.</td>
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</table>

*Thank you for participating in the trial stage of this project. Your feedback will help to refine the activities that have been drawn from other practitioners’ comments.*

Go to [www.eduvoices.wordpress.com](http://www.eduvoices.wordpress.com) to talk to other WELL practitioners in this project.
Appendix 7: Induction Evaluation

Induction Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trial Facilitator:</td>
<td>Project</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Detailed information on the client company was provided</td>
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<tr>
<td>The activities gave me a chance to ask questions I needed answered.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A good range of materials were used including media, procedures and the DVD – Not Your Usual Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have a good idea of what has to be done and when it has to be done by.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I know who I can go to for help on administrative, company and methodological issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There are resources available for me to use from day one.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have access to websites and materials on WELL.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It would be useful to follow up on these discussions after I have started at the workplace.</td>
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Other comments.

Acknowledgement:

This evaluation has been adapted from 'Not Your Usual Practice: Educational Voices in the Workplace' a WELL strategic project by Fiveways Training Support, and funded under the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program, by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.