

Reframing the Research and Work Skill Development Framework Facets to Support Becoming a Teacher

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Abstract

Attrition in the education profession is increasing, and this is putting pressure on teacher education programs to adapt and focus on work-ready graduates. Professional experience placements have a long history in teacher education, and there has often been a focus on assessing the cognitive aspect of professional practice. This emphasis has emerged in response to the requirement for graduates to achieve a set of largely cognitive standards as a measure of their readiness for the profession. The purpose of this paper is to reframe the facets of the Research Skills Development (RSD) and Work Skill Development (WSD) frameworks to integrate and identify the connections between the cognitive and affective domain within the context of teacher education. The facet reframing will draw on the Work Readiness Scale (WRS) currently used to assess health professionals for entry into the workforce. The current framing of language within the RSD, WSD, and WRS lacks the connectedness required to support teacher educators to develop cognitive and affective aspects required for work ready graduates. Hence, a hybrid reframing of the six facets has been developed to support teacher educators to develop programs that evidence a fluid connection between cognitive and affective aspects of becoming a teacher. Further research will explore the breadth of student journeys to becoming a teacher and developing their work readiness from the commencement of their program through to graduation.

Keywords: Research Skills Development, Work Skills Development, Work Readiness Scale, initial teacher education.

Work Readiness in Teacher Education

Employability and work readiness have increasingly become the focus of government policy with huge implications for initial teacher education program providers. Concerns about teacher quality are further

exacerbated by increasing attrition rates from the profession, with graduates not entering at all or not remaining within the profession beyond the first five years (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership AITSL, 2016). Government policy has been driven since 2014 by a review of teacher education undertaken by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) and the government response to the report recommendations. The review identified the need for classroom-ready teachers. One of the challenges in responding to the government policy agenda is the identification a clear definition of the term *classroom-ready* teacher. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2011) have identified a set of standards for Australian teachers that begin at the graduate level and move through three additional phases including proficient, highly proficient and lead teachers. The definition of *classroom-ready* teacher has been interpreted by many as the achievement of the graduate level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). These standards like those across a range of professions are focussed on cognitive knowledge and practice development and lack attention to affective, personal and emotional aspects of work skills requirements. Hence, there is a need to respond to the notion that teaching is an emotional practice that cannot be reduced to a set of standards (Hargreaves, 1998). Teacher education has as one of its challenges the development of teacher identity and the need to connect personal and professional aspects of teaching (Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2009).

The purpose of this paper is to critically analyse the Work Readiness Scale (WRS) developed for the health sector (Walker et al., 2013) to reframe the Research Skills Development (RSD) and Work Skill Development (WSD) frameworks with a particular focus on addressing both the cognitive and affective domains of becoming a teacher. Reframing work skills or readiness in the context of initial teacher education provides an opportunity to begin to develop a curriculum framework that supports preservice teachers' (PST) journeys through their program of study and into their professional life as an educator. The reframing of the facets to support curriculum design responds to the call for processes that will support teacher educators exploring differentiated ways for initial teacher education students to engage in the identification of their role as teacher (Abrandt Dahlgren & Hammar Chiriac, 2009; Cohen, 2010; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010).

Work Readiness in Higher Education

Work readiness is defined as the set of skills and attributes that make a graduate ready or prepared to be successful in their chosen profession (Caballero, Walker, & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2011). One of the challenges for higher education is establishing how to systematically develop the skills and attributes required for a profession within a program of study. The RSD and WSD frameworks (Bandaranaike & Willison, 2010; Willison & O'Regan, 2007) have both been developed to support higher education academics to frame curriculum and assessment that supports the development of students for their future employment. Each framework consists of six facets initially developed to support embedding research within undergraduate

programs. Willison and O'Regan (2007) identify that the six facets were informed by both an Australian and New Zealand information literacy framework (Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy, 2004) and Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). Both of these frameworks are focussed on the development of the cognitive domain rather than the affective domain. Graduates and employers understand the importance of the affective domain, including, for example, work attitudes and behaviours (Krahn, Lowe, & Lehmann, 2002).

Bandaranaike and Willison (2015) have explored the cognitive and affective domains as they relate to the WSD framework, with the addition of an emotional intelligence lens based on the work of Goleman (1998). Table 1 provides a summary of the development of the facets of the Research Skills Development and Work Skill Development frameworks. While the development of the facets across the three frameworks presented represents both cognitive and affective domains, they are less integrated and therefore do not illustrate the connectedness between the cognitive and affective domains. The development of the affective domains responds to employer concerns about the need for graduates to further develop emotional skills and work etiquette. The work of reframing the facets for teacher education will explore how the WRS items and the literature can inform the redevelopment of descriptions to incorporate the cognitive and affective intents across all facets.

Table 1. Comparison of Research Skills Development and Work Skill Development framework facets

Research Skill Development Framework facets and description (Willison & O'Regan, 2013)	Work Skill Development Framework facets and description (Bandaranaike & Willison, 2014)	Work Skill Development Framework facets and descriptions (Bandaranaike & Willison, 2015)
<i>Students develop a research mindset through engagement with content and increasing awareness of ethical, cultural, social and team (ECST) aspects when they...</i>	<i>The purpose of this framework is to integrate key employability skills into WIL and devise a measure for qualitative assessment in the workplace.</i>	<i>The purpose of this framework is to integrate emotional work readiness into the facets for the Work Skill Development Framework.</i>
Embark & Clarify <i>What is our purpose?</i> Students respond to or initiate research & clarify what knowledge is required, considering ECST issues.	Initiative & Enterprise Goal directed and motivated to embark & clarify.	Initiative Student is goal directed and clarifies and embarks on the role.
Find & Generate <i>What do we need?</i> Students find & generate needed information/data using appropriate methodology.	Technology & Resource Use Find & generates data/knowledge using appropriate skills & technology.	Technology Student applies skills, knowledge, technology and other resources to find and generate information.
Evaluate & Reflect <i>What do we trust?</i> Students determine the credibility of sources, information & data, & make own research processes visible.	Learning & reflecting Critically evaluates the role and reflects on lifelong learning skills and career management.	Learning Student critically evaluates their role and reflects on lifelong learning skills and career management
Organise & Manage <i>How do we arrange?</i> Students organise information & data to reveal patterns/themes, managing teams & processes.	Planning & management Organises & manages self while being perceptive to managing the needs of others.	Planning Student organises and manages self while being perceptive to managing the needs of others.
Analyse & Synthesise <i>What does it mean?</i>	Problem Solving & Critical Thinking	Problem Solving

Students analyse information/ data critically & synthesise new knowledge to produce coherent individual/team understandings.	Synthesises and analyses data to create solutions.	Student analyses & synthesises information to create coherent understandings.
<i>Communicate & Apply</i> <i>How will we relate?</i> Students discuss, listen, write, respond to feedback & perform the processes, understandings & applications of the research, heeding ECST issues.	<i>Communications & Teamwork</i> Writes, presents & performs with sensitivity to interpersonal communication and accounts for ethical, cultural and social/team issues.	<i>Communication</i> Student communicates and collaborates with others, and applies ethical, cultural, social and professional standards.

The RSD and WSD frameworks then develop a progression of student development with a focus on autonomy. One of the challenges in the context of a profession like teaching is that while autonomy is an essential aspect of becoming a teacher, there are many relational aspects of the role that involve building and maintaining a wide range of relationships in school communities. These are acknowledged within the WSD framework through the use of terms such as ‘motivated’, ‘perceptive’ and ‘interpersonal communication.’ Cohen (2010) asserts that teacher identity is something that is negotiated through talk both at the university and within school contexts. Teacher identity is defined as “how teachers define themselves to themselves and others” (Lasky, 2005, p. 901). Further research on teacher self-efficacy suggests that what university academics, teacher mentors, school administrators and peers say in the context of teacher education programs impacts on pre-service teachers’ beliefs about their capacity to undertake the role of teacher (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016). Therefore, the development of relationships in the context of teacher education programs is an important aspect of becoming a teacher. It is useful to draw on sociocultural theory and situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to explore the development of employability across the university coursework and work integrated learning experience as student’s progress through their degree with a focus on both the cognitive and affective aspects of work readiness. Exploration of the literature identified an increasing need within other practice based professions such as health for employers to assess graduates’ work readiness as part of the recruitment process. A recent addition to this literature in health is the Work Readiness Scale (WRS) (Caballero et al., 2011; Walker, Storey, Costa, & Leung, 2015; Walker et al., 2013).

Reframing RSD and WSD Facets to Support Becoming a Teacher

The WRS items were developed through interviews with graduates from a range of professions (Caballero et al., 2011), then further refined specifically for health professionals (Walker et al., 2013), and later nursing

graduates (Walker et al., 2015). The findings of work with the nursing graduates suggested that there are four main categories of work readiness: organisational acumen, social intelligence, work competence and personal characteristics. These four categories identify the importance of both the cognitive and affective domains of work readiness. The four categories are in stark contrast with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers that are largely focussed on the cognitive domains of work competence and organisational acumen with little attention to aspects such as social intelligence and personal characteristics. Further analysis of the WRS in comparison with the six facets of the RSD framework identified that each statement could be aligned with one of the six facets for the RSD and WSD frameworks. Each of the six facets contained statements that encompassed both cognitive and affective aspects of work readiness. Table 2 provides a summary of revised facets and samples of items from the WRS as they were matched to the six facets. The facet names were drawn from both the RSD and WSD frameworks and focussed on work readiness and becoming a teacher. One of the main shifts in this reframing was to go back to the original wording in the RSD for the first two facets. The second facet 'find and generate,' was identified as much broader than the narrower definition of technology and resource use from the WSD framework. The remaining four facets draw on wording largely from the WSD framework.

Table 2: Reframed facets based on the Work Readiness Scale

Facet	Sample statements from the WRS
Embark and clarify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I sometimes experience difficulty starting tasks. • Being among the best in my field is very important to me. • When a crisis situation that needs my attention arises I can easily change my focus.
Find and generate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am sometimes embarrassed to ask questions when I am not sure about something. • You can learn a lot from your colleagues. • I feel confident that I will be able to apply my learnt knowledge to the workplace.
Reflect and learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At work it is important to always take responsibility for your decisions and actions. • I look forward to the opportunity to learn and grow at work. • I see all feedback as an opportunity for learning.

Plan and manage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I get stressed when there are too many things going on. • I know my strengths and weaknesses. • I maintain an appropriate balance between work and outside interests.
Problem solve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People approach me for original ideas. • Analysing and solving complex problems is a strength for me. • I am always prepared for the unexpected to occur.
Communicate and collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing relationships with people is one of my strengths. • I communicate effectively with different colleagues and parents. • I feel confident to ask for support in dealing with interpersonal conflict at work.

The final phase in reframing the facets was the development of descriptions of the facets based on the analysis of the RSD, WSD, and WRS. The descriptions sought to illuminate both cognitive and affective aspects of each facet in the context of becoming a teacher. Table 3 provides a summary of the facet titles and descriptions that were redeveloped based on the literature explored.

Table 3: Becoming a teacher: Facets of Preservice teacher (PST) professional development

Facet	Description
Embark and clarify	PST are motivated to identify and clarify the cognitive and affective knowledge required to undertake their role as a teacher, including setting goals and identifying approaches to embark on the breadth of aspects of their role as a teacher.
Find and generate	PST know how to use the most appropriate approaches to find and generate information for both the cognitive and affective aspects of their role as a teacher.
Reflect and learn	PST critically evaluate the cognitive and affective aspects of their role as a teacher. They have the capacity to reflect on a variety of sources of evidence and feedback with a focus on lifelong learning and continual improvement.
Plan and manage	PST organise, plan and manage information and data for application in the context of their role as a teacher as an individual and as part of a team of education professionals. PST have the capacity to positively manage and influence difficult situations.

Problem solve	PST critically analyse and synthesise information to create coherent understandings and innovative solutions individuals and teams of educational professionals. PST have self-direction, drive and adaptability to strive for professional excellence.
Communicate and collaborate	PST discusses, listens, writes, presents and performs the role of the teacher in collaborative contexts with a range of professionals. PST have the cognitive and affective capacity to build relationships and apply ethical, cultural, social and professional standards required of teachers.

Conclusion

Exploring the implications of the emerging assessment of work readiness across professions provides a lens to support the process of reframing the RSD and WSD facets to support students seeking to become teachers. Further empirical research will be undertaken to identify how initial teacher education students respond to the WRS at various stages of their program of study to provide evidence of possible student journeys through their program of study and into the profession. It is envisaged that this work will provide the opportunity to explore ways to represent the range of student journeys for each of the facets that are part of becoming a teacher.

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