Certificate III
Education Support

30613 QLD

Diversity

TEIA

Table Of Contents

About This Workbook

This workbook is divided into sections which will cover the competencies and skills required.

This Unit of Competency has several resources:

- Diversity Workbook (this workbook): This resource provides either a self paced learning program or may be used as a reference resource.

- On-line course: Ask your teacher/assessor to register you in this on-line resource.

This course has been designed to appeal to differing learning styles, so the information and learning experiences are presented in different ways.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes are shown at the beginning of each section. Learning outcomes match the competencies you must demonstrate to be successful in this course of study.

Learning Icons

Throughout each book icons are used to indicate the activity or purpose of the text. The icons used in this course are explained on the following page.

Prerequisites

1. Sound literacy skills.
2. Sound numeracy skills.
3. Basic computer skills, e.g. able to use a mouse and limited keyboard skills

As you work through this workbook you will encounter different symbols that indicate a task for you to complete.

The introduction to the topic and overview of the units, and includes your instructions, assessment and objectives.

This symbol indicates there are Internet sites that will support your learning and provide further resources.

You are to complete the work indicated by this symbol in your notebook.

Work that is to be completed by you and returned to your teacher uses this icon. You are to return your work primarily through e-mail where possible, otherwise by other methods.

You may be asked to listen to or prepare a piece of audio work. Read the instructions carefully.

In some instances, your work may be returned by fax. This is indicated by the icon on the left.

A practical exercise is indicated by this symbol.

Supporting resources may be provided in CD-ROM format. Locations where these resources are to be used display this icon.

This symbol indicates "self-check" questions. Once you have completed the question you need to check your answers from the self check pages at the back of the book.

Unit Overview

This workbook supports the Unit of Competency CHCEDS312A
Work with diversity in the education environment.

This unit provides competency-based training in understanding the diversity found in educational organisations so that a person may meet the challenges of work in this sector. The unit is suitable for participants who are seeking work within a school as a teacher aide or in a range of educational organisations as an education support worker, ie. tutors in a distance education context.

It is essential, regardless of where the employment as a para-professional in schools or as a tutor in a home learning situation takes place, that the person has an understanding of how to demonstrate respect for individual differences and to work effectively with human diversity.

All workplaces are diverse environments and are made up of individuals who have differing life experiences and values. Only through understanding and awareness of the benefits of diversity within employees and students, do schools become better.

The Unit of Competency, CHCEDS312A *Work with diversity in the education environment* contains the following elements and performance criteria:

Recognise and value individual differences

1.1   Diversity is explored to identify attributes that may be of benefit to the school and its community
1.2   Colleagues are assisted to acknowledge and use their diverse attributes to contribute to work teams, educational outcomes and delivery of services
1.3   Own work practices are inclusive and benefit educational outcomes, community relationships and the work environment
1.4   Client diversity is identified and responded to in accordance with legislation, policy and guidelines

Work effectively with diverse students and colleagues

2.1   A range of communication styles is developed and used to respect and reflect the diversity of the school community
2.2   Compliance with the requirements of legislation, policies and guidelines relating to workplace diversity is demonstrated through personal conduct in the workplace
2.3   Feedback from colleagues and supervisors is sought and used to continuously improve personal effectiveness in working with diversity

Critical aspects of evidence

The following evidence is critical to the judgment of competence in this unit:

- knowledge of the requirements of anti-discrimination legislation
- understanding of the benefits of diversity to the school community
- principles and practices of cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication

Section 1

Respect for Individual Differences

On completion of this section, participants will be able to:

1.   Be aware of the need to demonstrate sensitivity to the differences between colleagues.

2.   Understand non-discriminatory behaviour in the workplace.

3.   Recognise differences between colleagues in accordance with workplace diversity guidelines.

4.   Demonstrate behaviour that is sensitive to the differences between colleagues.

5.   Modify their communication styles to reflect diversity.

6.   Show that their conduct complies with the requirements of anti-discrimination legislation and awareness of workplace diversity.

Australian schools generally have workplace diversity guidelines that are sensitive to the needs of a diverse set of employees. This set of potential employees reflects the diversity of our general population.

These guidelines, especially in public agencies such as state schools, support the organisation in its approach to workplace diversity. Diversity in this context includes gender, race, culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, age, marital status and disability.

On of the greatest 'school pools' of diversity is often found in the flexible learning and distance schooling institutions. These schools, due to their often large catchment areas amd range of students attending such schools for differing reasons, mean that the issue of diversity is significant.

Effective workplace diversity guidelines assist us in building a diverse and socially responsive workforce within our schools and by doing so ensures that all children are supported appropriately in their learning. Such guidelines also:
•   focus on the needs of students and their families;
•   incorporate the principles of merit, justice and fairness;
•   assist the school in delivering its learning and support programs;
•   draw on the wide range of skills available in our communities;
•   meet the requirements of the legislation.

The basic principle underpinning any diversity guidelines is the development of respect for others. Additionally this approach to diversity also leads to the creation of a workforce that is more representative of the Australian population.

In any school environment there are people with similarities and differences. People differ in terms of their personalities, abilities, levels of motivation, personal characteristics, experience, interests and approaches to children and colleagues. We are all different. No environment reflects a situation where all people are the same. All work environments share this characteristic.

The diversity in your workplace provides you with the challenge of working with and respecting a range of people. A set of ideal behaviours that demonstrate respect for others could include:

•   considering the needs of other people
•   accepting other people's differences
•   respecting cultural differences
•   valuing diversity
•   demonstrating sensitivity when dealing with other people
•   treating people with dignity

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As well as expecting individuals to treat others with dignity and sensitivity, organizations such as schools must also demonstrate an acceptance of individual differences in the way the organisations work and in the policies and programs they operate.

The intention of these policies and programs is to value a diverse workforce and to make use of the skills and knowledge of the people within this workforce. Such encouraging environments enable individuals to work to their full potential and the school and its students benefit.

Activity 1.1

Email your responses to your teacher/assessor.

1.   Identify and list the various differences within people in your workplace.

2.   Think back to identify ways in which your work mates, supervisors or people you work for have shown you respect and in some way been sensitive to your needs. Construct a list of how you can demonstrate sensitivity and respect to the people you work with.

3.   From your experience, what are some of the ways that a person's individual differences can form the basis for discrimination?

4.   How do government and organisational guidelines for diversity assist people in schools to do a better job?

You can show sensitivity to others in your workplace by:

•   Acknowledging that people come from different backgrounds and have different ways of thinking and standards of behaviour from your.

•   Being aware of your own assumptions and prejudices and challenging them.

•   Being aware of cultural norms and practices when you work with others.

•   Changing your behaviour to accommodate different cultural practices.

Cultural Diversity

Culture is the set of learnt understanding about how we live. This set of knowledge and attitudes is not transmitted from one generation to another spontaneously. It is a learned behaviour we gain as we grow and listen to and observe the world around us. Culture is the total of everything we have and do as a member of our particular society. It can be used to describe our beliefs and preferences.

The common rules and behaviour of one culture may be very different from those of another.   This does not mean that everyone from a particular culture will act in the same way but there will be significant commonalities.

Culture can be based on:
*   ethnicity/race, e.g. Indigenous/Vietnamese
*   sexual preferences, e.g. homosexual culture
*   friends/interests, e.g. club, drug culture
*   religious beliefs, e.g. Christian/Buddhist
*   age, e.g. youth culture
*   workplace norms

A workplace needs to have a non-discriminatory culture that does not exclude members of any group on the basis of any factor. It should be inclusive of all individuals. Inclusive workplaces are often defined by the following characteristics:

*   procedures and processes that are open and transparent
*   decision making processes that are fair
*   practices, especially in employment and promotion, that are fair and incorporate the idea of selection on merit

Activity 1.2

Email your responses to your teacher/assessor.

Use the Internet to check the following sites. List six points that support the idea of having a diverse and non-discriminatory workplace.

http://www.adcq.qld.gov.au/

www.hreoc.gov.au/sex_discrimination/workplace/index.html

www.hreoc.gov.au/info_for_employers/index.html

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb.nsf/pages/guideindex

Activity 1.3

1. Describe the dominant culture in your organisation. Before starting to write spend some time thinking about your workplace characteristics: ethnicity, age, sexual preference, gender, class, etc.

2. List the sub-cultures that people in your workplace also work in.

Our prejudices can be counterproductive in terms of extending our life and making our workplace more productive. It is not uncommon for people in a dominant culture to be suspicious of other cultures generally due to a limited experience of other cultures. We justify this to ourselves through the use of sterotypes. For example, you may think that women are not very good at leading groups; that all young people are able to handle computers well; or that Aboriginal people are irresponsible and cannot be trusted to complete a task. You are prejudiced in that by holding such strong beliefs you have ignored the fact that each person is different and may be able to work outside of your expectations.

These prejudices influence the way you communicate with other people and can impose false limits/expectations on the people with whom you work.

Each of us have behaviour patterns and attitudes that come from our cultures. We call these behaviour patterns and attitudes, *cultural norms* or practices. For example, it is a norm in some cultures to eat highly spiced food, to go to religious services on a Sunday, or for children to be educated separately on the basis of gender. Differences will often arise because an individual within our society has a different set of cultural practices to those followed by the dominant culture, i.e. the majority of the people in that society.

Cultural practices may include:

•   the types of food we eat and how it is prepared

•   the languages we use for communication

•   the religions we follow

•   gender roles

•   taboos or superstitions

•   ceremonies and celebrations.

Activity 1.4

What are the accepted practices of your culture (either the dominant or subculture) in relation to:

- How you express anger?
- What life activities do you celebrate?
- The food you eat?

Post your views on the course's Discussion Board.

Non-Discriminatory Behaviour

Schools should recognise the individual differences that exist in their workplaces and that these differences can benefit the learning and administration activites that occur there. Non-discriminatory behaviour should occur by:

- treating all with sensitivity and respect
- being aware of and accepting individual differences

Non-discriminatory behaviour means that you, through your words and behaviour, treat all persons equally, accepting and taking into account their unique characteristics.

Changing your behaviour

Cultural practices have an effect on the way people work and communicate. It is important that you demonstrate respect for other people's cultural practices by not trying to impose your own values and standards. You must consider your own values and try and change your behaviour so that it is more inclusive, i.e. accepting of other people's values and views of the world.

However, there is a principle called the Principle of Reasonable Adjustment. While individuals can recognise and accept individual difference, organisations (including schools) develop systems, policies and practices that attempt to remove disciminatory practices and promote diversity and equity. There is however a limit to the change an individual may expect.

Under the Principle of Reasonable Adjustment managers of an organisation may vary employment policy and practice so that the needs of an employee does not affect the efficiency of the workplace. That is, adjustments can occur to meet individual differences so long as the goals and targets of the organisation are still achieved.

Activity 1.5

Email your responses to your teacher/assessor.

1. A collegue is pregnant and indicates that she is no longer able to lift the heavy files at the office and requires at least twenty minutes off each hour to rest. Your supervisor seeks input from you as to whether you can take on these additional tasks and the value of accepting the woman's situation. How does the Principle of Reasonable Adjustment apply? How could the woman's task be altered to suit her needs?

2. Create a table that identifies four potential work practices that may be discriminatory as well as potential strategies that could be used to remove the discrimination.

Legislation

There are legal reasons for schools to work effectively with diversity. These sets of laws dictate how we treat people at the workplace.

In addition to these laws there are also codes of conduct that organisations develop to inform workers about expected behaviour. In the Queensland Public Service there is the Code of Conduct for all employees, including teacher-aides.

Study the **Code of Conduct** at this site: http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/codeofconduct/preface.html

Your behaviour at work must follow the advice in the legislation or you could face a penalty. Each workplace has a procedure for raising a complaint if an individual feels that they have been discriminated against. Usually the first step is to bring the two parties together: the one who has made the complaint and the one against whom the complaint is made. This is done because discriminatory behaviour is often a result of ignorance. Sometimes a person is not aware that their behaviour is not acceptable.

Anti-discrimination laws within Australia that must be addressed by schools include:

Sex Discrimination Act 1984   (Commonwealth of Australia)
This Act makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of someone's gender.

Race Discrimination Act 1975   (Commonwealth of Australia)
This law makes it illegal to discriminate against a person because of their race.

Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986.   (Commonwealth of Australia)
This law makes it illegal to discriminate against women in the area of employment and was developed with a view to removing some of the barriers to employment experienced by women.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth of Australia)
This law means that it is illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of a mental, physical or other disability.

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991   (State of Queensland)
This law outlines the penalties relating to the treating of one person less favourably (in a range of areas) than another because of that person's attributes, e.g. aboriginality, disability etc.

Equal Opportunity In Public Employment Act 1992   (State of Queensland)
This law relates to providing equal opportunity in the Public Sector within Queensland.

Both Commonwealth and state legislation make it ilegal to discriminate against people or treat them unfairly in the workplace. The following list of websites provides a brief overview of some of the legislation that protects people:

**Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland**
http://www.adcq.qld.gov.au/

NSW Anti-Discrimination Board
http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/adb/ll_adb.nsf/pages/adb_index

Equal Opportunity Commission of South Australia
http://www.eoc.sa.gov.au/

Equal Opportunity Commission of Western Australia
http://www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au

Northern Territory of Australia Anti-Discimination Commission
http://www.adc.nt.gov.au/adc/index800.html

Anti-Discrimination Commission Tasmania
http://www.antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au/
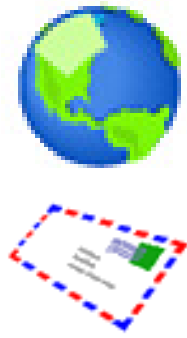
Activity 1.6

Email your responses to your teacher/assessor.

Using the webpages provided define the following terms and provide one make believe example that demonstrates how this could occur in a school:

> harassment
> vilification
> discrimination

Communication and Diversity

Communication includes the major forms we would expect to find in any workplace - speaking, listening, the use of body language and written communication. Diversity, be it due to cultural differences or gender, can affect workplace communication.

Messages have to be conveyed so that these are accepted and understood. The ways words are used, the intonation and expressions, body movement and other associated factors will differ between social groups. Effective communication relies on the employees being aware of the barriers to understanding and ways to remove or reduce misunderstanding.

Barriers to communication

You should not expect every person in your workplace to communicate in the same way as you do. To have this expectation may be raising barriers to open communication between yourself and all of your colleagues.

For example, some staff members who come from differing cultural groups from the dominant group may:

•   put a different meaning on steady eye contact (In some cultures steady eye contact indicates honesty; others think it is a sign of disrespect.)
•   have different ideas about humour
•   read body posture differently (Some cultures consider someone who stands upright as assertive and strong, while others find such a posture to be aggressive and bullying.)
•   need different amounts of space between themselves and the speaker (The concept of 'personal space' varies considerably between cultures.)

Nonverbal language differs between cultures. Check out this website to see how different gestures, use of eyes, etc. mean differing things in a range of cultures:

Gestures: Body Language and Nonverbal Communication
http://www.csupomona.edu/~tassi/gestures.htm#asian

Where communication is not effective, either through a lack of understanding by both parties or through discrimination, then the workplace and the students will suffer. On occcasions the way the message is intended by the 'sender' can be quite different from the way the 'receiver' perceives the message.

Some barriers that are commonly found in school 'miscommunication' include:

•   inappropriate choice of words
•   inappropriate way of speaking
•   receiver is inattentive
•   lack of courtesy by either or both sender and receiver
•   racist language
•   sexist language
•   stereotyping
•   inappropriate message
•   inappropriate timing
•   inadequate feedback by either or both sender and receiver
•   use of jargon
•   withholding information

Recognising these barriers and other causes of poor communication within schools is an important step in overcoming the difficulties.

Section 2

Working effectively with diversity

On completion of this section, participants will be able to:

1. Recognise workplace diversity as an asset for the organisation.

2. Provide opportunities for colleagues to capitalise on their special qualities and backgrounds.

A workplace can gain significant benefits when diversity is supported and the necessary processes are incorporated into the organisation's general operations. By incorporating the principles and legislation related to diversity within their annual operational plans, strategic directions and general activities, schools are able to ensure that no staff member or student is disadvantaged due to individual difference.

The individual capabilities of each staff member can be used within the organisation to provide better services and more effective work, especially with students. In order to make the most of individual differences, our school and ourselves must recognise the capabilities that are found within these differences.

Some of the benefits of embracing workplace diversity include:

* improved service to students who come from diverse home and social environments
* improved interaction with the local community
* greater access to the other services within our communities
* a wider range of skills, experience and knowledge to draw upon within the staff of the school
* greater loyalty and involvement of the staff
* different approaches to solving problems
* improved productivity
* lower levels of conflict
* enhanced job satisfaction and improved staff morale

Identifying your organisation's needs

To identify individual capabilities, you need to think about your students and the type of work you do. Then, you need to think about the skills and attributes needed to best serve these students and what skills would improve the quality of your organisation's work.

For example, you may have students who:

• are from a non-English speaking background
• have a disability
• belong to a particular sub-culture
• belong to a particular race
• have a particular socio-economic background.

Your work may include:

• working with particular students or groups of students
• writing information for particular audiences
• delivering learning programs

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Activity 2.1

Make a list of your clients (both internal and external, e.g. students you may deal with, people who come to the front office of the school, etc.) and their characteristics. Are staff allocated according to their unique skills, knowledge and characteristics?   Explain your answer.

Individual capabilities

Each person who works with you has special characteristics. These people have the potential to offer skills, experiences and opinions that can assist you and your school to better reflect the diversity of the world in which you work, e.g. the different children/families serviced by the school. Some people may not be contributing to their workplace to the extent that is possible. This may be because:

*   They do not value their own skills, i.e. *"Everyone I know speaks two languages – so what?"*
*   They may want to be part of the group and not appear different, e.g. *"I don't want to appear different as I'll set myself apart. I'm just starting to fit in."*
*   They have little confidence in themselves and the way in which they interact in their workplace, e.g. *"I'm so much younger than everyone else and no one's really interested in what I think."*
*   They do not know how they can contribute to the workplace, e.g. *"I know lots of people in our local indigenous community, but how does that help?"*

The more you know of your fellow workers (without being intrusive) the more you may encourage them to fill unique needs within the school and so improve the service offered to students and their families.

Activity 2.2

Using yourself and another person in your workplace, identify the skills and attributes that make you individuals. When you have done this, write down how these skills/attributes might benefit your organisation.

Providing opportunities

It is important for people to have their skills identified and recognized as being worthwhile in their workplace. Effective workplaces value the contributions of individuals and are more likely to make use of the special qualities and skills of their employees. While you are able to move some way to this ideal organisation by finding out more about colleagues through informal

discussion; looking at the work they do and the way that they interact; and/or an organisation (i.e. your school) can put in place a range of activities that support this.

Examples of some formal responses by a school may include:

Special Skills Register

A database of staff and community volunteers who have special talents, training, interests and backgrounds and who are willing to provide special expertise when required. For example, an indigenous aide may have strong family connections with some of the indigenous families in the school and so can act as a liaison between school and extended family.

Individual Development Plan

A training and development plan prepared by each staff member that encourages the growth of special and individual skills.

Work Experience Programs

Formal programs where staff and community members may experience other forms of work and work environments as part of their development.

In general terms if you are approaching a colleague in the workplace about making use of their special skills or knowledge, the following points are worth considering:

• Be specific about the skills being sought (experience with indigenous culture)

• Be specific about their desired contribution (offering advice; organizing a focus group).

• Be specific about the outcomes they are being asked to achieve (make parents more comfortable when visiting the school)