

Chapter 2 Participant characteristics

2.1 Participant role

The first level of the analysis examined the characteristics of participants (Appendix A: Table 2.1). The main roles of educational leaders (n=610) were principals (37%), school executives (20%), senior departmental administrators (13%), and “Other” (31%). Participants in “Other” roles, described themselves in roles associated with head of special education (17%), deputy or assistant principals’ role (4%), and the remaining participants (10%) in an “Other” role described themselves across a variety of roles such as classroom teacher or Aboriginal Education Officer.

The main roles of professional staff (n=1251) were teachers (48%), specialist teachers (31%), allied health (16%), and “Other” (3%).

The main roles of ancillary personnel (n=98) were office/reception (60%), maintenance (8%), cleaners (3%), and “Other” (29%). Participants in “Other” roles described themselves in roles associated with teachers or teachers’ aide (6%), science assistants (5%), and IT support or technicians (5%). The remaining participants (9%) in an “Other” role described themselves across a variety of roles such as school council members and business managers.

2.2 Prior qualification and training

Prior qualification in special education and/or disability

The rate of specialist qualification in special education and/or disability varied between educational leaders (n=574) and professional staff (n=1,227) (Appendix A: Table 2.2a). Educational leaders exhibited the highest rate of prior specialist qualification with 51% having had completed qualification in special education and /or disability. Of professional staff, 42% had completed qualification in special education and /or disability qualification.

Prior training in the Standards

The rate of prior training in the Standards varied between the participant roles. Figure 2.2 (Appendix A: Table 2.2b) shows the rate of prior training in relation to participants’ role. Educational leaders (n=574) exhibited the highest rate of prior training, with 33% of participants having completed training in the Standards.

Of professional staff (n=1237), 24% had previously completed training in the Standards. Ancillary staff (n=95) exhibited the lowest rate of training with only 2% having previously completed training in the Standards.

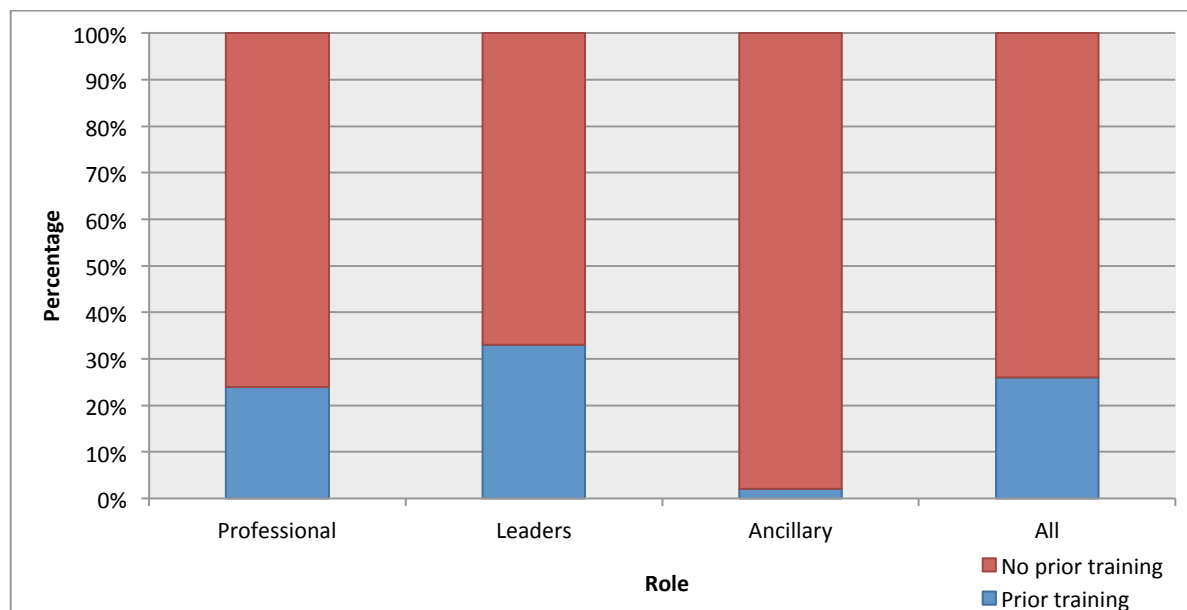
An average was calculated from participants across the three surveys, with 26% of participants having had completed prior training in the Standards. Of participants who had completed prior training (n=433), 94% indicated that they found some degree of usefulness from the training.

26% of participants across the three surveys had completed prior training in the Standards

When asked about the type of training in the Standards (n=280) 21% of participants described their training in the Standards as equivalent with formal qualifications such as Masters in Special Education, undergraduate or TAFE specialist courses.

21% of participants described their training in the Standards as equivalent to formal qualifications

Figure 2.2: Prior training in the Standards in relation to role



Comments

The survey question for qualifications focussing on special education and/or training was only asked of educational leaders and professional staff. During the analysis of educational leaders it was found that results for prior qualification and no prior qualification exhibited the same relationship with independent variables as prior training and no prior training. In addition, the open responses to types of training in the Standards indicated that participants were synonymising training in the Standards with formal specialist qualifications.

Specialist qualification in special education and/or training through formal undergraduate or post graduate studies usually focus on pedagogy and practices associated with inclusion. Training in the Standards, on the other hand, focuses on the rights of students with disabilities and their parents/carers and the legal obligations of staff and schools to meet their needs in the workplace. Although specialist qualification is not the same as training in the Standards, they may independently lead to an understanding of the intent of the Standards, thus going some way to explaining the interrelationship between qualification and training in the analysis.

Ancillary staff was not asked about specialist qualifications so this variable was not included in the analysis. As a result the focus of this report is on the relationship of prior training the Standards and other common variables.

2.3 Level of future training in the Standards

Participant role

The level to which future training in the Standards would be useful varied between participant roles as shown in Figure 2.3 (Appendix A: Table 2.3). Participants in ancillary roles (n=90) exhibited the highest rate (63%) of indicating that training in the Standards at the introductory level would be useful. Ancillary staff similarly represented the highest rate (20%) of not finding any training useful either due to lack of interest, or knowing enough about the topic.

Professional staff (n=935) and educational leaders (n=377) exhibited a highest rate (45%) of indicating that training in the Standards beyond the introductory level would be useful. Educational leaders had the highest rate (19%) of indicating that formal training would be useful. Across all roles (n=1,402), 43% of participants indicated that training at the introductory level would be useful, and 60% of participants indicated that training beyond the introductory level or formal qualifications would be useful. Only 10% indicated that they would not find any training useful.

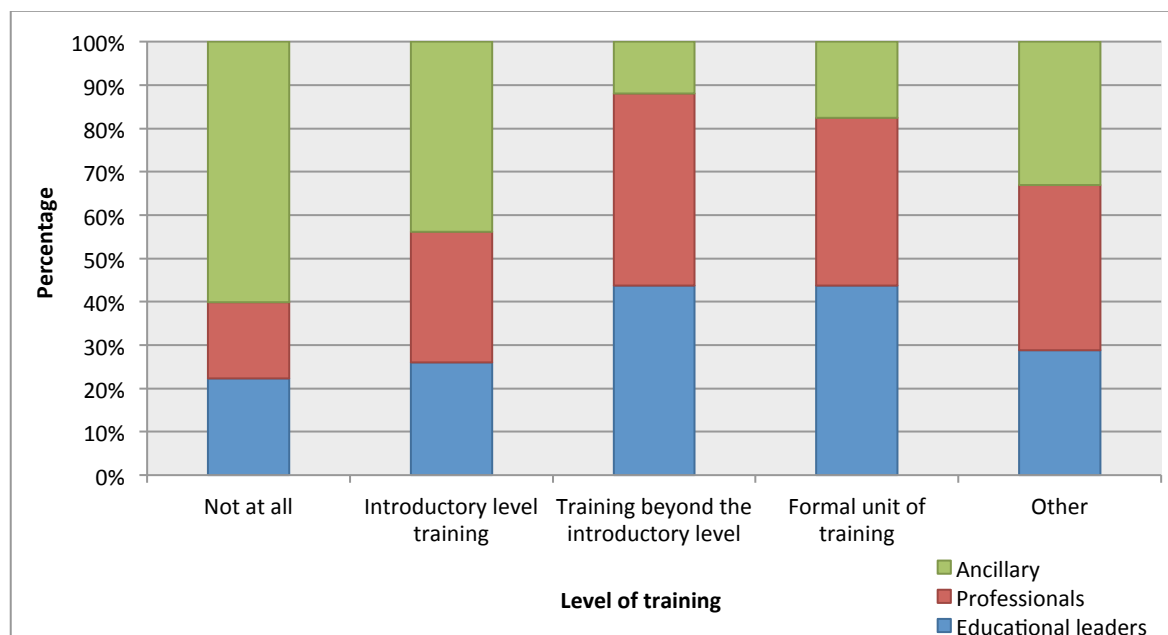
43% of participants indicated that training at the introductory level would be useful, and 60% of participants indicated that training beyond the introductory level or formal qualifications would be useful

Participants in the focus group also raised the issue of training on 11 occasions. Participants discussed training in relation to the promotion of professional learning (36%), and approaches (27%):

Recognition and reward new learning in a meaningful way

Applaud others /feedback/positive feedback/observation

Figure 2.3: The level at which future training would be useful in relation to prior training in the Standards



Prior training in the Standards

There was only a very small number of participants who had completed prior training in the Standards and indicated the level to which future training in the Standards would be useful (n=5), compared to participants who had no prior training in the Standards (n=1,397). Subsequently, this question was not analysed.

Comments

The results suggest that participant role had a relationship with the level to which future training in the Standards would be useful. Participants in ancillary roles previously exhibited the lowest rate of prior training in the Standards and had the highest rate of indicating that training in the Standards at the introductory level would be useful, and the highest rate of indicating that no training would be useful.

Participants who were educational leaders had previously exhibited the highest rate of prior training in the Standards and had the highest rate of indicating that formal training in the Standards would be useful.

Chapter 3 Participant characteristics in relation to attitudes, understandings and practices associated with the Standards

3.1 Participant understanding of the Act and the Standards

Participant role

Participants whose main role was educational leader (n=512) exhibited the highest average rate (81%) of indicating 'good or very good' understanding of the Act and the Standards and the lowest average rate (18%) of indicating 'poor, very poor or don't know' (Appendix A: Table 3.1a).

Participants in ancillary roles (n=85) exhibited the lowest average rate (37%) of indicating 'good or very good' understanding of the Act and the Standards and the highest average rate (63%) of indicating 'poor, very poor or don't know'. Professional personnel (n=1056) exhibited an average rate of 63% indicating 'good or very good' understanding of the Act and the Standards and an average rate of 37% indicating 'poor, very poor or don't know'.

Participants in the focus group similarly discussed concerns about understanding the responsibilities of varying roles under the Standards and the Act. They raised specific concern on seventeen instances in regards to the extent to which education departments, schools, educational leaders, teachers and School Services Officers (SSO) understand their role. Understanding the expectations, acts and perceived outcomes across the different roles was highlighted:

Teacher is responsible for the design of the learning program. SSO implements the program.

Negotiation with faculty about what is an adjustment. SSO is not an adjustment.

Prior training in the Standards

The rate of prior training (n=415) and the rate of no prior training (n=1,233) had a relationship with participant opinions on catering for students with disability in the workplace. Figure 3.1 (Appendix A: Table 3.1b) shows participant views on catering for students with disability in their workplace according to prior training in the Standards.

Participants who had undertaken training in the Standards had a higher average rate (90%) than participants with no prior training (60%) of responses of 'good and very good' in relation to their understanding of the Act and the Standards. Participants who had no previous training in the Standards exhibited a much higher rate (40%) than participants who had prior training (10%) of responding with 'poor, very poor or don't know' in relation to their understanding of the Act and the Standards.

90% of participants who had prior training in the Standards and 60% of participants who had no prior training responded with 'good and very good' in relation to their understanding of the Act and the Standards

Participants in the focus group discussed similar concerns about understanding the Standards and the Act. They raised specific concern on seven instances regarding understanding the terms *on the same basis*, *reasonable adjustments*, and *fairness* in the Act and the Standards.

Comments

The results indicate that educational leaders had the highest rate of training in, and indicated the greatest understanding of the Act and the Standards. Ancillary staff had the lowest rate of training and the lowest confidence in working with the Standards.

The results further show that prior training in the Standards had a positive relationship with participant understanding about the Act and the Standards.