Designing Higher Education CPD for the Integrated Qualifications Framework: Being bold, virtuous and pragmatic


Stirling Management Centre, University of Stirling, Scotland

Steven J. Coombs: Bath Spa University, Bath, UK
s.coombs@bathspa.ac.uk

Key words: Integrated Qualifications Framework (IQF), Children’s Services, Wider Workforce, professional learning, Postgraduate Professional Development.

The professional learning of the Children’s Workforce is a top UK government priority. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has recently published several major policy documents (Every Child Matters & The Five Year Strategy) relating to Children’s services and how the various professions can work more closely together. As part of this initiative the DfES set up a body called the National Remodeling Team (NRT) to strategically look at workforce reform and inter-agency working practices. As part of this major review of policy the NRT has recommended the implementation of an Integrated Qualifications Framework (IQF) that will help to link the plethora of various professional qualifications across all the professions related to delivering children’s services, i.e. health, education, social services, the police etc. With the recent integration of English Local Authority (LA) structures of education and social services combined into a new single responsibility of Children’s Services and with a new regional Directorate and National Children’s Services Commission, the implications for professional learning are profound. This initiative, combined with the need for higher education institutions (HEIs) to interpret the IQF in terms of both cross-professional programme design and the integration of vocational and academic standards, represents the focus of this paper. This paper proposes a draft IQF framework that can be adopted for new regional partnerships across HEIs, LAs and other providers of Children’s Services.
Children’s Services and the Every Child Matters agenda

In 2003 the UK government published the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) legislation in response to the Victoria Climbi enquiry, from which the core lesson of multi-agency working was drawn from this terrible case of child abuse that could have been prevented if all the various children’s agencies had worked more closely together. Following this Act of Parliament came the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES, 2004) that cited the following problem:

“Children’s services and education have been too compartmentalized. Services have not been joined up. Funding has been too fragmented” (p.6).

The five key principles underpinning children’s services education and training are:

1. Greater personalization and choice.
2. Opening up services.
3. Freedom and independence.
4. A major commitment to staff development.
5. Partnerships.

Out of these major reforms arose the wider workforce in schools, which is seen as a sub-set of the total Children’s Workforce. Since 2005 most Local Authorities in England have been reformed such that previous divisions between social services and education have been amalgamated into a common Children’s Services Directorate.

The DfES wider workforce initiative saw the creation of a National Remodeling Team (NRT) to reform working practices and services in schools, which has recently been amalgamated into the Training and Development Agency (TDA) for schools under their new remit of being the TDA’s Development Directorate (http://www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling.aspx) responsible for implementing two major initiatives: The National Agreement, and, Extended Schools. Another major agency responsible for developing children’s services is the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) (http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/), which funds the new Early Years Professional qualification (allegedly equivalent to QTS). The CWDC has also pioneered the goal of achieving an integrated qualifications framework (IQF) so as to provide clear progression routes across existing professional barriers in Children’s Services and thereby “Facilitate continuing professional development (CPD) for the whole workforce based on a recognition of common skills and knowledge that are applicable across the whole of the children’s workforce and in all settings” IQF Implementation Plan (CWDC, 2006) (http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/pdf/IQF/IQF_Implementation_Plan_1Nov06.pdf)

The Integrated Qualifications Framework

The following mission statement and rationale has been provided by the CWDC (2006) regarding the IQF:

*The vision for the IQF is to establish a qualifications framework that has acceptance and credibility across the children’s workforce at all levels and that:*
- Helps people deliver services that improve the lives of children, young people and those that care for them.
- Raises the profile and status of the children’s workforce.
- Meets the needs of employers.

From this IQF initiative it is clear that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to rethink their vocational curriculum from Foundation Degrees (FDs) up to postgraduate qualifications linked to the allied professions contained within Children’s Services. A first attempt to ‘map’ these vocational curriculum areas was proposed at Bath Spa University in February 2006 – see appendix A.

Later that year in 2006 the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) CPD committee set up a number of new Special Interest Groups (SIGs), one of which was to look at issues connected to the Wider Workforce and the Every Child Matters agenda.

**The UCET CPD SIG on the Wider Workforce**

The UCET CPD committee has been heavily engaged in joint partnership with the TDA to help develop appropriate CPD solutions for the so-called wider workforce located in England’s schools. UCET has provided members with regular information materials on this initiative (originated by the DfES) and has recently set up a special interest group (SIG) to investigate and report on all matters connected to CPD matters related to the Wider Workforce in schools. The UCET SIG on the Wider Workforce recently produced an agenda for action which highlighted a nine-point set of recommendations for UCET to take forward in its negotiations with key stakeholders, namely the DfES and TDA -- see exhibit in appendix B. It was from a number of UCET wider workforce SIG meetings that many questions and issues were raised as outlined in appendix B and elicited in the spidergram of appendix C that concentrates upon the focus group question “key issues regarding the wider workforce”. This exercise has been followed up by the focus question explored in the spidergram in appendix D: “What are the issues surrounding the development of the IQF from a Higher Education perspective?” The biggest issue for HEIs to grapple with is the need to provide smooth transition across the current vocational and academic qualifications divide between the academic degree levels and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Whilst there is rough equivalency between these levels there is as yet no automatic progression and straightforward universally accepted accreditation of prior learning (APL) across this education and training philosophical divide.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

Unfortunately this paper is at the beginning of a long journey and has posed many questions and provided few answers to all the issue raised. However, I would recommend the following ideas for colleague heads of CPD at HEIs across England:

1. Think big and act small. Try to grasp the bigger picture of the IQF and what it all means, but try to develop your area clearly within it.
2. Develop partnerships with your regional LAs, CWDC and regional development agency (RDA), so as to reduce the difficulties of communication across so many agencies and services associated with the Children’s Services agenda.

3. Keep in touch with the UCET CPD committee to find out how TDA funded work such as PGCE and PPD is being joined up with parallel professions’ educational agencies, e.g. CWDC. Please feed any examples of local good practice back to UCET and also any problems and issues that arise out of this ‘grand design’.

In conclusion I would recommend that we should deal with the IQF and future curriculum reforms in HE by being ‘bold, virtuous and pragmatic’. For managers of CPD I would like to draw your attention to the CWDC’s (2006) statement:

“For HE and professional qualifications, it is proposed that a set of sector endorsed learning outcomes will inform the structure and content of curricula” (p.6). My understanding of this statement is that the HE professional learning curricula will be funded by a range of Children’s Services professional education agencies that will impose strict vocational funding criteria on the programmes operating within the IQF. This would probably be a similar regime and philosophy to the current TDA’s (2005) postgraduate professional development (PPD) funding scheme for UK DfES qualified teachers to participate in ‘approved’ master’s/doctoral programmes that amongst other things have to provide evidence of sector impact in the workplace (Coombs & Denning, 2005), i.e. evidences that accredited CPD for school teachers delivers school improvement (Ofsted, 2004).

References


Websites
Every Child Matters: (http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/).
Children’s Workforce Development Council:
Training and Development Agency (Remodelling):
Universities Council for the Education of Teachers: (http://www.ucet.ac.uk/).
Appendix A

Vision Map for an Integrated Qualifications Framework (IQF) for HE programmes meeting Children's Workforce (CW) Provision across the SoE and the rest of BSU

SoE – IQF routes

- Academic ED validated modules
- Partner FE College NVQ IQF work linked to APL credit-rated

Work-based Access Modules into FDs

- For U/G low skilled professionals

Foundation ‘content’ Degree

Work-based Access Modules into the PMP

- For highly skilled U/G and graduate professionals

G Cert PL award route for U/G highly skilled professionals

PG Cert PL award route for all graduates – all career titles

Higher awards: PG Dip and MA/MTeach PL relative to range of career track titles spread across BSU

Research awards across all the IQF professional fields: M Phil & EdD, PhD

PG ‘content’ awards
PGCE
DipQSW etc.

Other MA ‘content’ awards

For ‘content’ read vocational content related to IQF professions: education, social work and caring, police & health etc.
Appendix B

UCET SIG: Wider Workforce (WW)

Agenda for Action – recommendations for UCET Council

1. Parity of funding, e.g. Access to same/similar funding opportunity for QTS and QTLS – rationale being DfES WW and 14-19 Agenda policy. UCET to liaise internally between CPD and PCET committees and then LSC and TDA through DfES channels. Need extension to PPD funding stream to be more inclusive of a range of other WW and Children’s Workforce (CW) professionals and para-professionals.

2. Clarity of future remit and purpose of TDA now that it contains the NRT, i.e. is it only operating within a schools agenda or does it encompass WW as part of the DfES Children’s Workforce policy?

3. WW requires a level playing field for CPD qualifications, e.g. Independent quangos such as NCSL should be brought under a common funding umbrella e.g. son-of PPD and all should have to produce same results and evidences e.g. aa WW funders/providers should have equivalent funding and accountability systems i.e. Impact evaluation of all education/training etc.

4. UCET to liaise with other professional education and training councils e.g. CETSW, SSC’s and Regional Health Authorities etc. for common approach towards WW and CW issues and implementation plans for DfES consideration. This could then put flesh on items such as the IQF.

5. Mechanisms for the promotion and recognition of TDA-approved Master’s degrees offered to both teachers and hopefully extended to the WW, e.g. disparity where NPQH is a pre-requisite for all Head teacher appointments but there are no commensurate career grade enhancements for PPD awards. PPD funding criteria impose TDA QA standards upon such programmes and should be built-in to career enhancement levels, i.e. transparent reward levels.

6. Need a universal Charter status for CW through the IQF and professional enhancements and esteem, i.e. Articled and Chartered status for recognised CW professionals – thus we need an extended remit and purpose for the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC).

7. WW remit requires a common qualifications foundation and working framework that brings together NVQ and recognised QAA academic standards – at the moment there is a philosophical and conceptual mismatch regarding what is meant by the term “standard” vis-à-vis the academic versus training world.

8. Draft TDA vocational “standards” do not require teachers to engage/operate across the WW/CW professional divide. Also is there a similar commensurate standards framework governing all other WW/CW professions? The TDA teaching standards implies a CPD rationale so there fore needs to include reference to WW/CW operational objectives.

9. WW defines impact as evidence of learner-centred change management situations, e.g. learner encompasses the participants, i.e. children professionals. Need to identify WW/CW venues as learning organisations.
Focus question

Key issues regarding the 'Wider Workforce'

- Funding issues e.g. PPD narrow to only QTS. Need to define HEI QA policies for work-based learning and WW accreditation.
- Teachers’ thru’ UCET segregated as Education representative only
- Wider Workforce versus Children’s Workforce.
- TDA new remit, ITT and CPD and new integrated teaching standards. New ‘Ofsted’ watchdog for entire WW and Children’s Services?
- Best Practice models of Professional Learning Partnerships, e.g. SWIFT and Edge Hill/Lanc’s etc.
- Vocational NVQs versus academic levels, e.g. H & M. Transfer capability across NVQ and HEI levels – cross-currency.
- NCSL competition with HEIs and CPD divisions by DfES. Common CPD qualifications and funding platform needed across all agencies, e.g. HEFCE for FDs, TDA for PPD and NCSL for NPQH.LFtM etc is inconsistent, discriminatory and divisive.

Appendix C

Common CPD funding integrating TDA PPD with LSC CPD funds across schools/FE divide. Policy: Recognise Cert Ed (FE) for new PPD with QTS. QTLS

Reconceptualising an inclusive model of CPD across the Wider Workforce professionals with commensurate funding and career-based pathways.

Time management of QTS staff, e.g. PPA time not allocated to CPD

Lack of currency, transparency and reward across groups.
Focus question

What are the issues surrounding the development of the IQF from a Higher Education perspective?

- Developing a proper work-based learning culture around the axiom of adult professional learning
- The need to first bridge current CPD divides across the educational sectors of schools, early years & FE and adult education
- TDA issues over Wider Workforce for schools versus Children’s Workforce.
- The need to bridge the qualifications gap between HEFCE academic levels and the NQF used by the vocations.
- Dealing with professional progression issues within HE, i.e., routes from Foundation Degrees (FDs) to PG professional opportunities
- Obtaining targeted HEFCE funding to incentivise HEIs to produce wider IQF solutions beyond the current ring-fenced numbers for FDs.
- The problems associated with the plethora of multiple agencies representing Children’s Services professionals.