

Notes from SATESOL Briefing Meeting on Reforms to the AMEP
3-5 pm on Zoom
15/06/21

Attendance: over 60 people.

- Proposed reforms to take place in the 2023 contracts
 - Tenders will probably be called sometime towards end of 2021, early 2022
 - Allowing time for feedback; sign of hope and underlines importance of everyone participating in giving feedback

- **Case for change**
 - When making submissions/going to forums, important that individuals look at **goals** of AMEP
 - Feedback should be directed towards wording of those goals (“program seeks to advance social participation, economic wellbeing, independence, and personal wellbeing; all contributing to enabling the full participation of migrants in Australian life”); increases likelihood that will be heard
 - **None** of the reports listed recommends outcome-based funding, which is recommended in the discussion paper

- **An outcomes-based model**
 - Misleading reference to Joint Standing Committee on Migrant Settlement Outcomes, at which ACTA representatives attended and gave evidence
 - Summary of the Committee is accurate but what follows bears no relation to what the Committee recommended, viz.: “*service-provider payments linked to outputs and student outcomes*”
 - this is not in any report
 - bringing in line to move towards outcomes-based payments to VET providers, rife in NSW – students are pushed through courses and given credentials that mean essentially nothing
 - SA TAFE: get payment when students are failed, but not if they withdraw for any number of reasons
 - They budget for projected number of non-numbers/withdrawals.
 - They are paid when students finish
 - Unlike TAFE Institutes, AMEP providers don’t have recurrent funding to underwrite set-up and teacher costs pending students achieving outcomes.

- **Table 2**
 - Shows what is currently done, and what is proposed for the future
 - Difference between ‘outputs’ ‘outcomes’ seems arbitrary/insignificant
 - Increasing initial payment by 3%
 - Increase ancillary payments and activities by 13%

- this includes Volunteer Tutor Scheme so not clear really how much of an increase this is
 - Inputs
 - Providers currently paid for hours of tuition, which is why teachers must mark the roll
 - Going to 0% -- payment providers will not be paid for tuition
 - Payment per competency (as defined by new national curriculum, the EAL Frameworks) – 63% of providers’ payments will depend on students achieving competencies
 - AMEP provider cannot underwrite teachers’ salaries in same way as TAFE which gets recurrent funding
 - no provider can function if their initial income is 33% of their original budget (5% + 28%)
 - * *Does 4% include regional and remote students of cohort adjustment?*
 - NB: Table 2 also shows a significant reduction in available money for EAL/D tuition (from 83% to 67% of total budget)
 - Extending eligibility and raising exit proficiency level means the budget should increase but actual budget estimates are less for AMEP than in the previous budget
 - Uncapping of hours has therefore come with a huge catch → Govt. is not anticipating an increase in the number of people in the AMEP
 - these measure to reign in expenses in dramatic way
 - people will, in fact, be turned away from their legislative entitlement to AMEP tuition
 - Gearing payments to competencies, even if it was generous, will increase the frequency of assessments:
 - only way providers get paid for tuition is if they give tests
 - pressure to test students will be huge
 - all teaching will be defined in terms of EAL Frameworks competencies
 - forces providers to teach to assessments
 - as a result, broader settlement-based information/learning will not occur
 - teaching narrowly is bad situation for providers
 - using the ARMs before the current contract (2017) providers could report individual results for specific learning outcomes and record partial achievement of module, e.g. a student could be reported as gaining a reading outcome even if they hadn’t gained a writing outcome; under current reporting system, they cannot record these specific outcomes. Will this be possible with the new Information Management system?
- **‘A new information management system:**
 - The system promised for the 2017 contract doesn’t exist, even after allocated 4 million dollars
 - Will the new system be in place in time for the new contracts?
 - Will it be trialled and will providers be consulted along the way?

- **‘Q1. Is an outcome payment on attainment of a qualification the most effective way to incentivise student outcomes?’**
 - Students knowing that teacher only gets paid if they pass would be *corrupt*
- **Q3. Is the outcome payment the most suitable point to apply a cohort adjustment?**
 - Must be applied at the beginning – need money upfront for low-education background
 - Can’t simply move them to community based, volunteer-led provider, ill-equipped to address their learning needs
- **Department wants lots of feedback, need to tell their Minister that it’s not going to work**
 - Battle will be fought in political, rather than professional or bureaucratic, feedback arena
 - Minister only interested in employment outcomes
 - Attitude at ministerial level is not necessarily shared by others
 - Political, rather than professional, battle
- **‘Flexible delivery of tuition’ and Distance Learning**
 - Should be looking at distance learning as part of flexible delivery
 - DE curriculum and resources need to be developed centrally using high expertise and maximal use of resources — why would this curriculum be different to the EAL Framework? If DE used the EAL Framework , it would need to be developed to be more flexible and open?
 - Flexible delivery of DE could mean that local providers support the centrally developed curriculum and resources, e.g. they could offer tutorials face-to-face, i.e. really high quality distance education is developed centrally, but the delivery is done locally
 - Some WA participants felt WA needs are different and raised problems in applicability across different regions
 - But if curriculum is sufficiently flexible this problem could be overcome developed.
- **CWLF**
 - Unclear balance between community & work-based learning re budget
 - Are outcomes to be measured from classes funded from the CWLF?
- **‘Community’ classes**
 - Unclear what is meant “community-based learning”; could mean –
 - Conversation opportunities with well-meaning community volunteers
 - Community Hubs
 - Classes for people who are not eligible for the AMEP – these were necessary in the past but not now
 - Out-reach and/or part-time delivery of the AMEP accredited curriculum

- “Community centres” that are sub-contracted to deliver the AMEP, SEE Program, state labour market programs, and also offer conversation classes with volunteers – common in Victoria
 - Classes taught by people without TESOL qualifications
 - A continuation of the failed “Social English” stream
 - Classes for students who can’t keep up the pace in the new assessment-driven outcomes-based payment system.
 - Accredited courses need to be taught by qualified teachers who have experience/knowledge addressing their needs
 - It is totally wrong and discriminatory to assume that, for example, people who are “slow” learners, who have minimal previous schooling, who are mothers and carers, do not want to be taught by qualified teachers and do not want to gain credentials (however slowly)
- **‘Work-based learning stream’**
 - Delivery of work-based programs is one of the most complex and difficult to deliver, requiring qualified, *very* experienced teachers; must negotiate with employers etc
 - ‘resume writing and job-seeking’: resume-writing may be fairly simple but job-seeking includes interviews – preparation for them requires high-level teaching and training
 - Delivery in the workplace
 - More often than not, employers don’t want to give away their time
 - In many cases, if workers are prepared to stay on after work (often not), there’s no suitable place to teach in and/or not enough people employed who require tuition to make it viable; therefore, classes must run at a loss
 - More effective use of funding to support employment might be to put it into a proper Counselling and referral service
- **‘Introduction of the EAL Frameworks as the a national curriculum; online learning’**
 - On-line and face-to-face teaching should not be combined in the one class
 - The EAL Frameworks is currently used mostly in Vic
 - Vic AMEP teachers said they hated it to start with but now it’s reasonably OK
 - Clearly chosen for the new national curriculum because it is free
 - Investment required to develop EAL framework to be as flexible and open as possible; teachers need PD; more resources to support EAL framework and proper professional development that isn’t assessment directed
 - What will happen when EAL is reaccredited, which is necessary by end 2023
 - will the re-accredited EAL be forced to align with ASQA requirements?
 - how are providers supposed to cope in developing resources over 6 months for the old curriculum and then have to swap to the new reaccredited one after another 6 months in 2024? Work into developing tasks will go for nothing
 - what about providers in other States who must meet ASQA rigorous task development requirements? How will these providers meet these requirements

○ **HUGE QUESTION: What will happen to institutions not in Victoria who are subject to ASOA requirement Vic and delivering EAL?**

- **‘Changes to the Volunteer Tutor Scheme’**
 - No provision for supporting volunteers in ongoing ways – currently provider has at least one person available on the phone to answer questions
 - No support for recruitment strategies e.g. letter box drops – tutors have dropped off since the local paper will no longer advertise for them.

- **‘A new payment structure for childcare’**
 - Both options are for a lump sum and providers deal with it as see fit, rather than payments based on the number of students supported
 - This looks like a cut to childcare payments
 - Will badly affect participation and especially women’s access to AMEP
 - Current funding model means that AMEP students must stay on-site with their children in care, unable to go off-site for excursions
 - Outsourcing regulation and requirements to providers

- **‘Q24. What outcomes should be the focus in measuring AMEP performance?’**
 - Need to distinguish between national goals and measurable outcomes of AMEP
 - Cannot directly assess AMEP’s performance against national goals
 - Need to ask: what can be measured? what can AMEP be held accountable for?
 - Assessment of performance must be set against *evidence-based* benchmarks
 - This evidence has not been consistently collected over the life of the AMEP, and not even since the beginning of competitive contracting in 1996
 - If data exists is not consistently available in the public domain
 - No consistent reporting on participation (enrolments and retention rates)
 - Social Compass found that every time an AMEP contract changes, participation drops and takes about 18 months to recover
 - Measuring outcomes is necessary but the data is worthless if financial incentives attach to specific outcomes
 - Program quality should be independently assessed and monitored
 - ACTA is circulating a paper that sets out how AMEP outcomes could be measured and the AMEP’s performance assessed.
