National Skills Taxonomy Discussion Paper

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DEWR Consult hub

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9   Lessons from existing taxonomies

The landscape for future work both international and domestic appears to about skills based hiring. This has potential to provide more inclusive and equitable opportunities, more about what people can do and experience. This aligns with the leaning approach EREA Flexis are pursuing.

It is welcoming to see the interest and emphasis placed on skills taxonomies in recognition of the landscape. However, there is not a consistency of language for transferability across stakeholders and support for movement across education, industry and society.

We support the identified need for alignment across actors.

Evidence of skills, ability and capacity to demonstrate in action, is more than a paper result, such as a grade, inherent in this is the actual evidence of being able to do or use something well.

Evidence is dependent on context therefore the value is in the diversity and flexibility of evidence so common language which gives the portability and reliability of use is most important. Skills imply that they can be timely and relevant to a situation.

We recommend retaining those features of existing skills taxonomies that provide criteria to measure progress to capture development of skills, particularly transferable skills (human and cognitive in particular), to highlight the importance of lifelong learning as these skills will continue to develop and adapt to different contexts.

We support the focus of using the language and understanding of Skills in the taxonomy as it appears that skills are currency of the jobs landscape.

Some areas to address would be to provide list of skills that is concise and adaptable to context not too prescriptive to limit use and currency. The provision of a common and trusted taxonomy of skills should support better use of micro credentials and more tailored learning for students.

10   Potential use cases for a National Skills Taxonomy

There appears to be a key focus by industry on lifelong learning as a critical requirement for workers to enable reskilling and upskilling for timely and flexible responses to changes in work requirements. Therefore, it is no longer just about the 'piece of paper' showing the acquisition of knowledge, it is more about the evidence of how knowledge can be used in practice and how it can be adapted, created and innovated; this is about skills.

Skills cover more than technical/content, the value NST can add is providing a common and consistent language and understanding of the people and cognitive skills that are in demand and enable adaptability, flexibility and innovation in our landscape of constant change and volatility. Having a consistent language and commonality of understanding of skills in demand allows for transferability across sectors.

Importantly, a national endorsed taxonomy can enable students to build a skills portfolio that is recognised and understood by schools, tertiary education and employers and promotes a more fluid transition between education, training and employment. This would also provide a language platform for schools and industry to provide work integrated learning for students. A common language and description of skills in demand should promote confidence of students to navigate and make choices in an ever-changing landscape.

Importantly, we believe a taxonomy that puts the focus on skills, evidence of doing, should encourage a more inclusive and equitable approach for education. Importantly, employers could see the value of a wider and more diverse pool of quality applicants for whom traditional assessment practices and recognition do not enable the development and recognition of their diverse range of skills they have and can develop.

Skills are about evidence of being able to do something in action and can widen the evidence beyond the formal curriculum and classroom to enable students to demonstrate their ability to learn from a wider range of experiences and build their confidence. For many young people, it is important for them and their teachers to access the language and understanding of what a skill looks like so they are able to collect their evidence in context which is not limited to formal curriculum or the classroom. This fosters more inclusive and equitable learning opportunities.

A NST could possibly challenge the education sectors' codification of knowledge into subjects. Using the skills in demand to describe job requirements instead of formal knowledge can enable a more clear focus on starting with skills, such as critical or creative thinking, and developing these in context. This context could be project or outcome focused and subjects integrated to support the skills development. Core foundational skills such as literacy, numeracy and digital literacy would be an entry requirement for students to engage in a skills focused education to successfully learn.

The existing 5 point grade reporting processes could also be challenged with more emphasis placed on reporting on progress and development of skills to support lifelong learning.

We would suggest a vision that supports the development of a Skills Passport or Folio for each student recognising a range of human and cognitive skills developed and evidenced in a variety of contexts not limited to the classroom. This should encourage more inclusion and equity within education and build confidence and success for a wide range

of young people who are not well served by the traditional existing educational structures.

Importantly, the skills included in a NST would be the ones in demand for work and therefore provide credibility and portability to the development of these skills. This should enable young people to build their confidence and capability to readily adapt to work changes, navigate and make choices in work that connect to their interests and strengths leading to better productivity and returns for employers. A focus on human skills for our young people will also support our vision for them to add value to a social and just society.

Some suggested guiding principles would include:

Design and language that enable equity of access for diverse groups

Development of skills that promote use of a range of contexts for evidence and recognition – not just inside the classroom

Adaptability of language and description to allow for timely and dynamic response to changing landscape of economy and society

Provide or enable foundational or pre levels for the skills – to enable all young people to become lifelong learners, many need a way of entry into the NST.

11 Building a National Skills Taxonomy – design considerations

Considerations could include:

- Definitions and nomenclature
- Structure (skill groupings and typologies)
- Granularity
- Information attached to each skill – provide criteria or enable the development of criteria that show what a skill looks like at different proficiency levels – development happens in context and this is where evidence of proficiency of skill is collected.
- Proficiency and levelling would be very helpful to provide national credibility and portability of evidence.
- Ability to align and complement other taxonomies

12 Building a National Skills Taxonomy: Implementation considerations

Not answered

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Collect, manage and analyse surveys and consultation data

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