



**Developmental
Educators
Australia
Incorporated**

**Scope of
Practice in
Developmental
Education**

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Acknowledgement of First Peoples

Developmental educators recognise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples of the land now known as Australia. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded. This nation's First Peoples are connected to the oldest continuing cultures on earth. We acknowledge the many Nations on which we live, work and enjoy life. We acknowledge and respect First Peoples who work within our profession.

We value the First Peoples ways of being, knowing and connecting to Country. We recognise that First Peoples ways of knowing and being with 'disability' are not the same as those of the dominant western culture. We endeavour to work with and alongside cultural custodians and knowledge holders to improve our practice. As a justice-oriented profession, we stand in solidarity with First Peoples in the continuing effort for social justice and autonomy.

Acknowledgement of People with Disability

Developmental educators recognise that people with disability are at the centre of our profession. We acknowledge the past and continuing injustices that people with disability experience. We recognise the rights of people with disability and endeavour to collaboratively ensure those rights are upheld. We acknowledge people with disability who work in our profession and acknowledge people with disability, their families and communities who collaborate with us in practice and research.

Disclaimer: While care has been taken in the preparation of the Scope of Practice, it is not intended to deal with all circumstances. This document is made available on the terms and understanding that its authors are not responsible to any person, in respect of anything, and of the consequence of anything, done or omitted to be done by any person in relying, whether wholly or partially, upon the whole or any part of this document. DEAI expressly disclaims any and all liability (including liability for negligence) in respect of use of the information provided.

Glossary

Biopsychosocial model recognises the experience of disability is not just a biological or psychological or social issue. There are many factors that influence and assist an individual. A person's functioning or disability is a dynamic interaction between health conditions and environmental and personal factors. Disability is the umbrella term for any or all of: an impairment of body structure or function; a limitation in activities; or a restriction in participation. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2001) follows a biopsychosocial model.

Credentialing is the process of validating an individual's qualifications, skills, experience, training and/or competency to perform certain procedures or service activities against a set of recognised standards.

Extended skills are emerging practice areas from new developments, innovations, technology or research and are important for the development and growth of the profession.

Human rights model is based on human rights principles, and "recognises that disability is a natural part of human diversity that must be respected and supported in all its forms. People with disability have the same rights as everyone else in society," and disability "must not be used as an excuse to deny or restrict people's rights." (DARU).

People with disability are defined by the CRPD (2007) as "including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder a person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Social model of disability places emphasis on how the social world disables people, with a focus on environmental factors such as cultural attitudes and physical structures. This way of conceptualising disability does not imagine certain bodies to be superior or inferior to others. The emphasis is on appreciating the value of differences.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe the guiding frameworks, professional roles, activities, and practice settings covered by the profession of developmental education in Australia.

The Scope of Practice has been developed in alignment with the Code of Ethics and Practice for Developmental Educators (2015) and the Developmental Educators Core Competencies (2022). These documents describe the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and ethical behaviour expected of DEAI members practicing in Australia.

Developmental educators practicing with the Scope of Practice meet the DEAI Core Competencies via formal qualification at an AQF7 (4-year bachelor) or AQF9 (master's degree) level in a disability studies discipline: <https://www.deai.com.au/core-competencies-of-developmental-educators>

The Scope of Practice aims to provide a description of the breadth of practice carried out within the developmental educator profession in Australia, but it is not intended to be an exclusive list of areas of practice.

Developmental educators may extend their scope of practice via additional qualifications, experience, or training. Extended skills are not covered by the Scope of Practice; however this should not limit or prohibit developmental educators working in these areas subject to appropriate training, credentialing and/or endorsement by an employing body.

DEAI currently has an extensive role in credentialing developmental educators at the point of graduate entry into the profession (Entry-Level). Credentialing of extended skills is NOT undertaken by DEAI. Credentialing of extended skills is typically undertaken by employing or statutory bodies.

The Scope of Practice will be regularly reviewed to reflect current needs, knowledge, and research to include new areas of activity for developmental educators in Australia.

2 Developmental Education

2.1 What is a developmental educator?

Developmental educators are qualified professionals who specialise in working with people with disability using a human rights framework to achieve full and effective inclusion and participation in society.

Developmental educators consider the whole person and their sociocultural context. Practice centres on the lived experience, needs, goals and aspirations of people with disability. Developmental educators collaborate with people with disability to promote inclusion and address attitudinal and environmental barriers. They do so by employing a range of professional and technical skills including applying developmental, behavioural, learning and social theories; assessing the person and their environment; collaborative planning and goal setting; teaching skills through evidence based instructional strategies; supporting life transitions; programming, monitoring and evaluation; advocacy; community education; and capacity building.

Developmental educators are autonomous professionals in that they exercise their own qualified judgement, and their services are not planned or supervised by another profession. Developmental educators frequently collaborate with other professionals in multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary teams.

Whilst involvement of a developmental educator may improve health, wellbeing, and functional capacity for a person with disability, developmental educators do not diagnose or treat health or mental health conditions.

Developmental educators are responsible for ensuring they work within the limits of their competence and update their professional knowledge and skills as needed and required. Developmental educators are required to receive supervision from a DEAI approved and qualified professional supervisor who holds full membership from DEAI.

2.2 Framework for Practice

The Framework for Practice for Developmental Educators presents the underpinning framework, critical perspectives, theoretical models, pillars of practice, and principles of practice that influence and shape the approach of developmental educators in Australia (see Figure 1).

At its foundation, the framework is underpinned by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD, 2007). The purpose of the CRPD is “to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.” (CRPD, 2007, Article 1).

Critical perspectives: Developmental educators are philosophically based within the discipline of disability studies. Disability studies is an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the lived experiences of people with disability, drawing on historical perspectives regarding systems and structures of oppression, and the responding rights and liberation movements. Formal education in disability studies centres on the rights of people with disability, the impact of intersectionality, and employs people with disability in designing supports and structures for equitable participation in society.

Models of disability: Developmental educator practice is informed by the social model of disability, the human rights model, and the biopsychosocial model underpinning the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2001).

Pillars of Practice: Four pillars of practice guide a human rights approach to practice. These are: justice; equity; access and inclusion.

Principles of Practice: Developmental educator practice is strength-based, holistic, person-centred and culturally responsive. It utilises and promotes co-design approaches and is informed by the best available evidence to meet the needs of and centre people with disability as agents in their own lives.

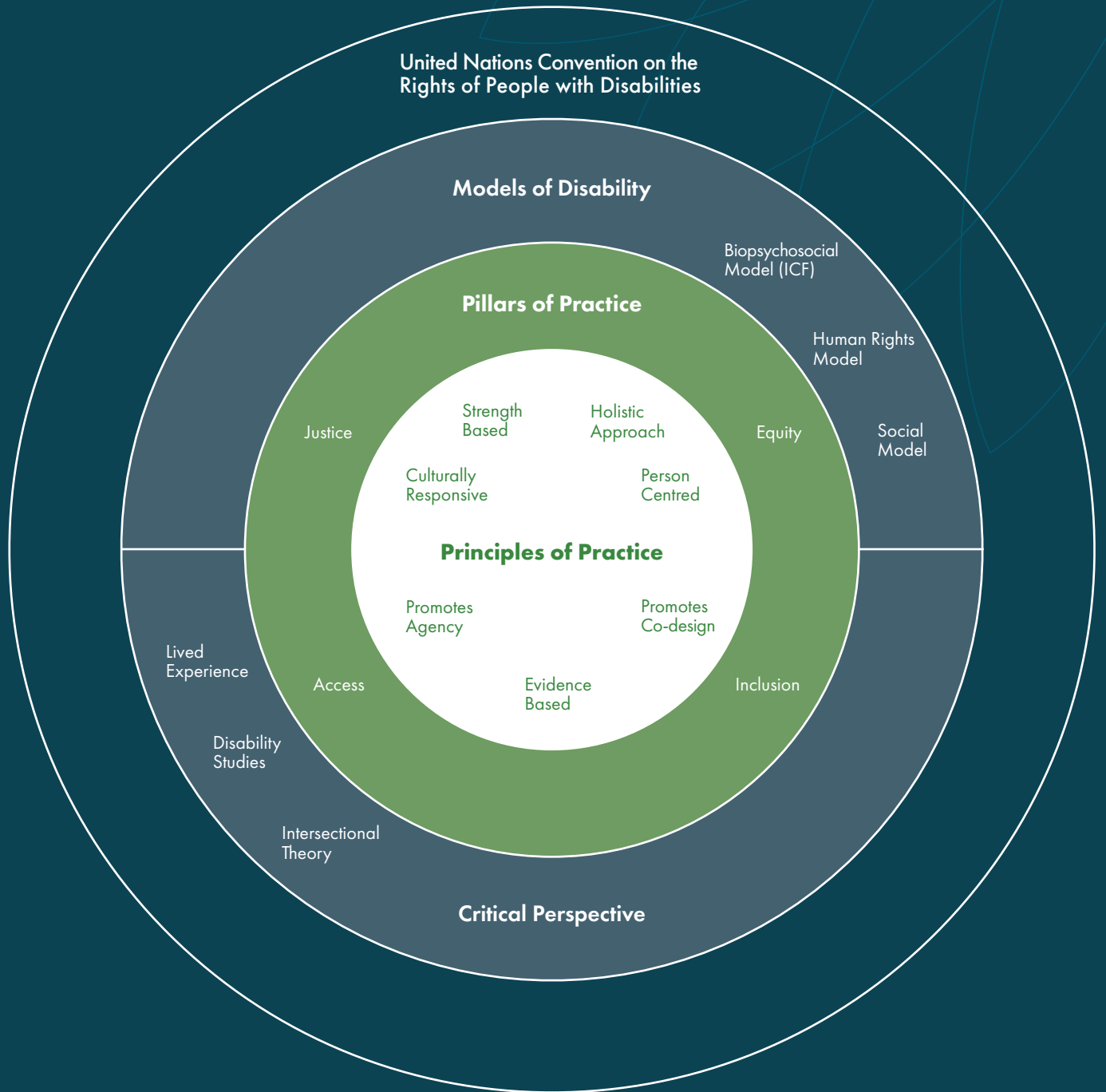


Figure 1. Framework for Practice for Developmental Educators

3 Scope of Practice

3.1 Scope of Practice relationship

The Scope of Practice forms one of the core foundation documents for developmental educators practicing in Australia. Figure 2 illustrates how the Scope of Practice relationship fits within existing legal, ethical, and professional frameworks.

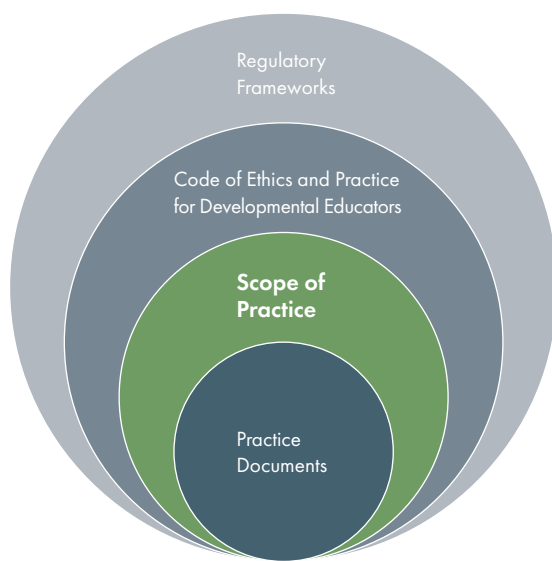


Figure 2. Scope of Practice Relationship

3.2 Who developmental educators work with

Developmental educators work with and alongside:

- people with disability across the full lifespan
- parents and families, caregivers, communication partners, friends, and colleagues
- employers
- advocates
- other professionals including health and allied workers, educators, therapy assistants, support workers, interpreters, and cultural custodians
- government and policy makers
- general public and community
- industry
- volunteers
- developmental educator colleagues and university students

3.3 What developmental educator practice includes

Developmental educators provide a diverse range of services and supports, which may include:

Skill Development

Developmental educators promote the development of skills for people with disability to enhance inclusion, independence, and quality of life. This may include:

- appropriate developmental, functional, and behavioural assessment where the practitioner meets qualification and accreditation requirements*
- collaborative planning and goal setting with people with disability
- planning for life stages and transitions
- employing evidence based instructional strategies to teach skills in a variety of life domains
- implementing, monitoring, and reviewing support plans.

* With appropriate formal qualification, training and supervision a developmental educator may be accredited by the appropriate body to administer and interpret assessments (eg User Level B registration with Pearson Clinical to administer and interpret assessments such as the Vineland-3™ and ABAS-3™)

Disability Advocacy

Developmental educators engage in co-design through collaboration and active engagement of people with disability to understand, explore and change systems together. Developmental educators recognise and respond to ableism in individual actions, organisational and institutional systems, policies and practices, and advocate for justice and change. This may include:

- promoting the development of self-advocacy skills for people with disability
- undertaking individual and systemic advocacy with and on behalf of people with disability
- engaging and promoting co-design practice
- conducting research and informing policy
- involvement in committees, working groups and boards

Behaviour Support

Having had training in contemporary approaches to behaviour support, developmental educators employ a human rights approach to behaviour support for people with disability. This approach to human behaviour is embedded within the everyday practice of the developmental educator. Developmental educators may also pursue a career as a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Practitioner*. In this role, they work within a PBS framework to provide a person-centred and collaborative response to behaviour support needs of people with disability.

PBS Practitioners provide clinical behaviour support services, including:

- functional behavioural assessment and formulation
- functional analysis
- development and implementation of person-centred and multi-component PBS intervention plans
- reducing reliance on restrictive practices
- coaching and supporting stakeholders
- therapeutic skill development
- PBS supervision, training, and education.

* The PBS Practitioner is a defined and regulated role under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Restrictive Practices and Behaviour Support Rules 2018 (NDIS, 2018). A PBS Practitioner working within the NDIS must register with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and practice in accordance with the Positive Behaviour Support Capability Framework (NDIS QSC, 2019).

Access, Education and Capacity Building

Developmental educators work to improve access to and participation in health, education, work and community for people with disability. This may include:

- identifying barriers to access
- working to address structural and attitudinal barriers
- facilitating pathways for people with disability
- providing case management/coordination of supports

Developmental educators improve knowledge and understanding of disability and diversity for individuals, families, and the wider community. This may include:

- designing and delivering training/education programs
- providing accessible information
- consultation with others

Developmental educators build capacity for individuals, families, and communities. This may include:

- increasing self-efficacy and self-determination
- challenging expectations and building aspirations
- enabling the development of a positive identity
- ensuring people understand their rights and responsibilities

Other roles

Developmental educators may also be engaged in other roles such as:

- supervisors (including DE students and colleagues)
- managers
- researchers
- policy advisers
- employment services professionals
- consultants
- community development practitioners
- provision of expert evidence and testimony

Note 1: It is noted that some areas may necessitate specialised education, training, and supervision.

Note 2: While some examples are provided, lists are not intended to be exhaustive nor exclusive.

Note 3: A developmental educator does not work typically with all people or practice in all contexts listed in this document.

Note 4: It is recognised that some activities may also be undertaken by other professionals and/or in consultation with other professionals.

3.4 Where developmental educators practice

In Australia, developmental educators work in a private or public capacity, in various contexts.

Some examples include:

- accommodation settings (independent living and supported accommodation)
- disability services
- early childhood intervention
- adjunct to education settings (childcare; preschool; mainstream primary and secondary schools; special schools and special education units)
- employment settings
- correctional institutions and justice system
- health care and rehabilitation settings
- aged care
- local, state and federal government (eg local councils; Department for Child Protection; NDIA)
- not for profit organisations
- private practice
- universities and research facilities

4 References

Disability Advocacy Resource Unit. *Introducing the human rights model of disability*. <https://www.daru.org.au/how-we-talk-about-disability-matters/introducing-the-human-rights-model-of-disability>

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