

**RESPONSE TO DISCUSSION PAPER**

June 2010

**“Stronger futures for all young Victorians”**

**Theme- Literacy & Numeracy**

**What form should the proposed literacy and numeracy standards take?**

**Response:**

Standards have already been researched, developed and validated to produce the **Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)-**

[www.deewr.gov.au/australiancoreskillsframework](http://www.deewr.gov.au/australiancoreskillsframework)

These competency based standards deconstruct literacy and numeracy in five key areas- reading, writing, oral speech, learning and numeracy. We propose that these standards be the benchmark against which students are assessed.

Kangan Institute is mid way through a Literacy & Numeracy project which reveals that there is no single literacy/numeracy tool that is equally relevant for mixed cohorts (ages, ethnicity, variance in education levels, etc) -thus making assessment and baseline data difficult to establish. To fulfil that need, VETASSESS is developing an online assessment tool (can also be hard copy) that directly maps to the aforementioned ACSF.

It is essential that literacy and numeracy standards be explicit. **Utilising ACSF ensures portability, consistency and provides standard baseline data against which valid evaluation can be undertaken and improvements measured.**

**Question:**

**In what other ways can the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills be strengthened in the post-compulsory years?**

**Response:**

In addition to the above response, we suggest that young people’s literacy and numeracy skills would benefit greatly by considering:

- **Integrating these skills into all VET programs** in same way as OHS competencies have been.
- **Integration of literacy and numeracy with employability skills.**
- **Widespread testing/assessment** to identify appropriate support mechanisms
- **Involving Industry Training & Assessment Boards(ITAB) and Industry Skills Councils(ISC)** who may have a role in identifying minimum standards of literacy and numeracy for various Australian Quality Framework (AQF) levels and/or vocation

specific literacy and numeracy required at various levels for various job roles.

### **Theme: Informed Education & Training Choices**

#### **Question:**

**Will a career plan strengthen young people’s engagement with education and their capacity to make informed study and career choices both during schooling and in subsequent education, training and employment settings?**

#### **Response:**

It is our view that some form of career plan will help strengthen young people’s engagement with education and the world of work. However, it is critical this approach does not promote a linear career plan or lock-step pathway –this would just further narrow young people’s choices and increase disengagement. We must move away from the myth that academic success in school alone leads to positive and meaningful careers and job choices. I.e. **Never too late to take control of your education and employment choices.**

An effective career plan is about exposing **young people to broad entry and exit points** in training and employment. They need to be able to see how certain skills are transferrable across vocations and that rapidly changing work roles provides them with opportunities to play to their strengths and/or change vocational direction at multiple points in their lives.

“Career planning” needs to be so much more than reading course guides and practising job interview techniques. By shifting the focus from the overwhelming range of jobs/courses available to a career plan that has at its crux, self awareness and personal development, it is much more likely that young people will engage and set the groundwork for informed choices.

Career plans expand students’ capacity when they are inclusive of:

- Strengths based development
- Emotional intelligence and self assessment
- Linking individual capabilities to sector intelligence and vocational suitability
- **Pathways to training inclusive of school, VET, higher education via simple visual documentation.**

#### **Question:**

**What other actions should be taken to ensure that sound career development services are available to all young Victorians?**

**Response:**

As a policy direction:

- anywhere that young Victorians train, there should be an appropriate and qualified careers advisors to assist young people with personal assessments, vocational interests and information, pathway planning, awareness of choice and diversity. (individualised)
- Needs such an initiative to be implemented beyond secondary schools to reach larger audiences of young people. For instance, locations where you find significant numbers of young people –TAFEs, Universities, Centrelink, Employment Agencies etc
- Every Careers Counsellor in schools should have appropriate qualification –

**Young people should have access to same high quality information regardless of which educational sector they find themselves in at any given point.**

**Question:**

**How can business/industry be more involved in assisting students' career choices?**

**Response:**

ITABs and ISCs have a significant role to play in assisting young people's career choices. It would be very **helpful to have these peak bodies clarify and produce information** on:

- entry points and exit points for vocational sectors
- pre-requisite study/work and qualifications required for particular job levels
- current market intelligence about work opportunities and employment growth or demand in various occupations and future vocations.

**Theme - Arrangements that support and encourage young people to complete qualifications**

**Question :**

**What would further strengthen the delivery partnerships between government and non-government schools and between schools and VET providers?**

**Response:**

Technical Education Centres (TEC) are an example of an opportunity for neighbouring schools (govt and non government) and VET providers to share facilities and share specialist training skills, like teacher exchange. This will improve engagement and subsequently completion rates for young people and avoid the "either/or" dichotomy that excludes rather than includes many young people.

However TECs are at an embryonic stage so it is important that policy direction overtly supports

- A range of options to support the needs of different young people
- Caution in promoting options that essentially 'stream' young people into 'academic' and 'vocational/tech' settings in isolation from the diversity of options available through blending educational programs eg VET in schools, VCAL and flexibly

customised programs.

- TAFE having a key role in the education of young people under 17 as a viable option alongside secondary colleges, TECs. Statistics show that 1 in 7 young people (between 15-17 yo) already study in TAFE, ACE and private RTOs ( although predominantly in TAFE)

Communities need enough **options to cope with the diversity of student needs and interests.**

Young people need **educational processes and funding that facilitates transfers between settings/options.**

**Establishing systems that allow and encourage students to move back and forth between educational settings/types will necessitate stronger partnerships** between schools and VET providers.

**Question:**

**Would greater levels of institutional specialisation in curriculum and qualification delivery result in improved quality of provision, and support increased student attainment of Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification?**

**Response:**

A similar model to this used to be known as **district provision –whereby local access provides students with choices of different educational settings** including alternative schools, TAFE, secondary schools, ACE, private & independent schools, as well as neighbourhood education programs. This has been trialled in the UK and a proponent of transforming learning and building local capability through district provision is Wayne Craig, Director, Northern Region, Dept of Education and Training, Victoria.

Our current generalist model can result in a lack of diversity in programs. Research shows culturally minimalist offerings in lower socio economic demographics and sometimes in rural and regional settings—for instance, a lack of creative and performing arts. A single institution cannot offer all things to all people – it is forced to appeal to mainstream so reduces offerings to ensure viable numbers or alternatively, has to be a very large

In our view, it is **possible to use the district provision model to offer a broader scope of options to assist both with student retention and student engagement** –precursors to improved student completion of qualifications.

**Question:**

**How should schools, VET providers and system authorities use the new transparency and accountability arrangements in Victorian schools and the Victorian Student Number to improve the completion rate of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications?**

**Response:**

We support the **implementation of an Australian Student Number** rather than the more limited Victorian Student Number. The risk with multiple ‘unique’ identifiers is higher error rate. Transparency and accountability cannot be consistently applied across a number of different tracking systems which is not in the best interests of either students or education providers.

By having an ASN, this tells you rate and numbers of qualification completions and then system authorities could use it so that **funding followings individual student tracking**.

**Current data is inaccurate because no tracking capacity on individual students** –measuring numbers does not take account of multiple enrolments or capture non-enrolments.

**Question:**

**What other strategies could be introduced to lift qualification completion rates for young people in the schools and VET sectors?**

**Response:**

Initiatives such as regular and individualised Pathways Plan –in schools this could happen before school year commencement (annually Year 9 up) and in VET at pre-enrolment stage. Essentially this is about ensuring young people are in the right setting undertaking the right program at the right time for them.

**Pathways Plans are strategies that encourage conversations between educational provider and student and incorporate advanced planning promoting empowerment and sense of direction.** They are intended to be living documents that are subject to change and review. These plans are similar to Individual Learning Plans using a multi-faceted approach including:

- personal direction/pathways
- vocational journey
- Literacy/Numeracy assessment & support
- Employability skills

This links to previous responses in relation to improved use and access to careers advisors who are best placed to undertake a needs identification/needs assessment/pathways planning with a young person.

It is a more rigorous version of annual MIPS –all trying to do same thing with young people with little coordination or reference to previous information. There is a significant need to **develop online e-portfolio so information transfers with the young person**, not simply statements of results.

## **THEME – ARTICULATION AND MOVEMENT**

**How can governments improve provision and articulation arrangements to better support young people, especially in regional and rural areas, to access tertiary qualifications without needing to re-locate?**

### **Response:**

- Presently no compunction for articulation provision from TAFE to Higher Ed (or reverse)
- Multiversity model a viable possibility for regional/rural/ outer suburban growth corridors.
- National Articulation Framework – see Qld model- not institution based but universal arrangements that provide pathway information between courses and qualification levels.
- Need quality in both areas so where there are deficiencies, there is the capacity for students to again move between settings.
- Links to assessment standards (external, independent)
- VTAC increase responsibility to do assessments to facilitate direct entry
- ENTER below 80 not a good predictor of success or otherwise at university – consider demand driven model in University and affirmative action quotas

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