

# **SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

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## Introduction

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The Vocational Education in Schools program has been running at varied levels of success for a number of years. At present, the large number of school students nationally who are enrolled in VET in schools program is an indication of the huge success and relevance of these programs. The VET in schools programs definitively takes account of different learning pathways for young people, and in that regard alone, provides young people with choices in both education and vocations.

In response to the Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools, CREATE Australia therefore welcomes the opportunity to feed into this inquiry. As the national industry training body for the cultural industries, CREATE Australia submits the following comments regarding VET in Schools. [See Attachment 1 for further information on CREATE Australia].

### **The range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, including teacher training and the impact of vocational education on other programs**

At a recent forum in Canberra, run jointly by the Education Careers and Enterprise Foundation and The Australian College of Educators, it was evident that there was an enormous range of vocational education programs running in schools around Australia. It was also clear from that forum that there were considerable systemic difficulties concerning professional development for teachers who deliver VET in schools courses and issues around the impact of vocational education and training on other programs.

Professional development for teachers was desperately required and broader issues of systemic support and recognition were also identified as key themes. Regarding the impact of vocational education and training on other programs, issues here included difficulties of crowding the curriculum, status of different programs, terminology and varying levels of understanding [or confusion] about what was 'vocational' and what was 'vocational education' and what was 'general school education' and so on.

Clearly these issues are not simple to resolve, but they reflect the continuing need for renewal of debate about the purposes of school education versus that of vocational education, or debate about their complementary roles in a world of new modes of work and new technologies.

To date, in CREATE's sectors [see Attachment 1 for further details], many of the now vocational programs have traditionally been delivered as high school subjects. These include visual arts, design and technology, drama, music and English. Their current equivalents in the new industry training packages are visual arts, craft and design, the performing arts, music [non AMEB], and writing, publishing and journalism. Obviously, there are many overlaps and boundaries between the traditional high school subjects and their new vocational counterparts. In essence, these overlaps and boundaries relate directly to the content of the curriculum -which in many cases is similar, the performance levels required and methods of assessment - which are very different- and the contexts and application of that content - which again in many cases are very different.

Very often, in high school subjects, the balance between context and content has been out of balance. High school students for example in traditional English courses have been taught to 'write', but only with the examiner as audience, and within an academic framework. In the 'real world' however, all writing has a particular audience in mind. The question might well be asked, *'Well what is the point of learning to write without an audience, when the subsequent*

*success of your writing will be based precisely on how well you pitch your writing to your audience?* Many would argue that there is a point of learning about language in a purely academic way, but if schools frequently make claims about developing young peoples' knowledge and skills for the real world, then it must be clear when and how this is done, when and how it is not done and when and why it might not be done.

Curriculum renewal is occurring and the recent introduction in NSW of the New English syllabus in 2001 has gone a long way to preparing young people to address 'real world' language skills, as opposed to purely academic English language skills. Many argue that the recent changes undermine the value of the study of classical and literary texts. However, more accurately what it does highlight is the need for schools to better explain the purpose for studying the classics in an academic sense, and delineate when they [or curricula] are not doing that.

A further example of confusion about the different purposes of curriculum and the role[s] of schools, occurred with CREATE and the new music industry training package. Traditionally music programs in schools prepared young people for a life of performance in music. Many would argue that studying music at schools, even if it did not lead to becoming a performer, would be part of a generalist education, not necessarily designed to have a vocational outcome. The new music industry training package however, provides a very focused vocational outcome for young people, [and embraces promoters, music business, recording artists etc] and is also very clear in intent and content. However, in introducing the training package into schools, there was substantial resistance from teachers to the package as they felt it was not 'academic' or 'traditional' enough and 'would not lead to university studies in music' which was precisely its aim. But the cultural shift within some schools, towards recognising a practical skills-based outcome, had not yet occurred and many teachers continued to try to massage an academic curriculum into a hands-on one.

CREATE therefore would like to see a better balance between academic curricula and vocational curricula and therefore an explicit recognition of the varying roles of different curriculum content. This clear distinction could also be applied to the different purposes of schooling, i.e. general 'whole person education' versus 'vocational education', with the recognition that the two could frequently overlap or could happily complement each other. This would also better define the various pathways and options which schools, and VET in schools can offer young people.

### **The differences between school-based and other vocational education programs and the resulting qualifications, and the pattern of industry acceptance of school-based programs**

The points under the above heading partly address this issue. In our sectors to date there has been varied acceptance of industry acceptance of school-based programs. In Entertainment, industry has generally not been satisfied with the level of skills achieved by VET in schools learners. Equally with the entertainment industry training package, school-based content of the Certificates I and II have been modified which would have to raise questions about whether the same outcomes are being achieved.

Assessment methods within schools, which are traditionally psychometric and written, are based on very different concepts of validity and reliability to those in the vocational education and training sector, which are performance-based. Conceptions of what is meant by the 'the test' versus what is meant by 'competency-based assessment' is central to the issue of whether industry can accept school-based programs of VET in schools. Vocational education is based around practical applications, and schools frequently experience the same

problems as vocational providers do in trying to meet the rigour of workplace-based assessment.

## **Vocational education in new and emerging industries**

CREATE Australia believes that this is where our sectors can play a major role in the education of young people. For example, film, television, multimedia, performing arts, and entertainment, are all areas under CREATE's coverage, which are supply driven, particularly at the school level.

CREATE considers that these industries are increasingly significant for a future which combines these skills and creativity. In the words of Dr Terry Cutler, former head Australia Council, quoted in the BRW on 29 June 2002:

*Creativity, and particularly digital arts, will become increasingly important in innovation in the wider community, particularly for science and technology. My working formula for Australia's success in the 21st century is a dynamic information society as a function of creativity plus knowledge.....The role of creativity in the innovation process is not well appreciated locally, unlike in the United States or Europe, where groups such as the MIT Media Lab have shown the benefits of interdisciplinary research. British Prime Minister Tony Blair's cultural policy emphasises the importance of community creativity - from schools to research institutes and corporate boardrooms. There is huge potential in such creative collaborations.*

The future world of work also requires new, more generic skills. With the massive increase in outsourced labour and casualisation of the workforce, individuals now need a breadth of generic skills in addition to the technical skills of their vocation. They must navigate and negotiate complex interpersonal and occupational networks, manage financial and technological operations, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to and manage change with confidence and enthusiasm.

In addition, creative skills are increasingly required by workers required to deal with visual technologies such as the Internet and multimedia work-based environments. The need to produce and interpret visual meanings, audio meanings and linguistic meanings in the new, multimodal communications systems and multimedia environments require new multiliteracies, many of which could be explicitly taught to young people in a school environment, through VET in schools programs in our sector.

It is essential for our sector to achieve solutions to the issues of school learning and workplace learning, not only because of the attractiveness of the cultural industries to young people, but because of their centrality to new and emerging industries as noted above. Young people should have access to the latest media technologies and opportunities, as well as increasingly key skills such as writing [particularly electronic writing], multiliteracies, performing, making presentations, expressing themselves, and creativity, in ways which recognise real world applications and not just in ways which analyse and study these academically.

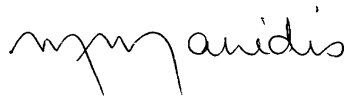
## **The accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for Indigenous students**

CREATE also considers that a number of its industry training packages are ideally suited to 'access and equity' programs for Indigenous learners. This contention is based on a number of elements, the first being the significance of cultural expression to the Indigenous community and its availability to many young people in these communities. Various sectors of the arts are a natural, and comfortable form of expression for many Indigenous communities, and many young people in these communities have confidence and skills

already in working in a number of artforms which are increasingly recognised within Australia and overseas.

In addition, a recent significant research report to come out of Britain recently, underpins the enormous effectiveness in the arts in social inclusion outcomes for young people from socially-troubled backgrounds and or those excluded from mainstream educational and social activity, which is often, though not always the case, with Indigenous learners. [See Attachment 2, under separate cover].

CREATE Australia would be happy to provide additional information to support this submission.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marie Manidis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M'.

Marie Manidis  
CEO CREATE Australia  
Thursday, September 26, 2002