



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR PRIVATE
EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ACPET)

Submission to the Standing
Committee on Education and
Training

Combining School and Work: Supporting Successful
Youth Transitions
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1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. TERMS OF REFERENCE.....	4
3. THE WAY FORWARD	6
4. CONTACT	7

1. Introduction

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) is the national industry association for independent (non-government funded) institutes of post-compulsory education and training. ACPET represents more than 1,200 organisations delivering a full range of higher and vocational education and training and English language courses to both domestic and international students.

ACPET welcomes the opportunity to present a submission to the Standing Committee on Education and Training on *Combining School and Work: Supporting Successful Youth Transitions*.

ACPET is committed to building an education and training sector in Australia which helps all individuals to establish rewarding, social and economic lives that contribute to a productive and socially inclusive nation. Investment in our youth through education and training will help Australia's future prosperity and the well-being of its people.

A significant proportion of ACPET members either work directly with youth in helping them to make successful transitions into work and/or work indirectly with students via schools and community organisations in delivering programs which are part of an overall transition program to work. With the workforce becoming more global, it is important that students have every opportunity to learn in a range of contexts in order to prepare them to become productive members of the Australian population.

In supporting youth to make successful transitions from school to work, ACPET support a school and post-compulsory education and training system which is underpinned by:

1. Choice - students have the opportunity to choose a school/provider who can develop a learning program suited to their needs and not be restricted in their choice by regulation or funding arrangements;
2. Quality - the student (and parents/carers) must be guaranteed that the outcomes of a service or program (fee for service or government supported) are quality assured; and
3. Social inclusion - no individual should be denied the opportunity to access quality education and training services to assist them to establish rewarding, social and economic lives and/or businesses.

ACPET supports a schooling sector which enables individuals (parents/carers and students) to choose a school suited to their needs. This choice would be best facilitated through learner-centered funding rather than through recurrent and capital school funding. Individuals, with funding available to them based on their needs, would be able to choose the school most suited to equip them with foundation skills, values, knowledge and understanding necessary for lifelong learning, employment and full participation in society.

2. Terms of reference

ACPET accept the statement in the terms of reference that ‘managing the demands of study and part-time or casual employment is part of everyday life for the majority of Australian school students’. ACPET also agree that there is limited research, information and guidance about the effect this has on the lives of young people.

ACPET, through a process of consultation with members, have provided comment on each of the terms of reference.

2a. Providing opportunities to recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students’ part time or casual work.

ACPET supports an accreditation process where all learning is valued and where possible through quality assurance mechanisms, is recognised. Significant amounts of research highlight the employability and career development skills gained through students’ part time or casual work however the research also indicates that our systems fail to recognise and reward this learning.

A significant factor which hinders the recognition of this type of learning (formal and informal workplace learning) is the lack of knowledge and skills amongst the people (school and workplace) who are responsible for making judgements and quality assuring this learning. To recognise and acknowledge students’ learning from part time or casual work, a team of individuals is needed, led by a workplace trainer and assessor (TAA40101 qualified as per AQTF requirements), to gather the required evidence to support students’ applications for recognition of this learning.

ACPET suggests an approach where teams of people from workplaces and schools can be trained in the required skills (skills sets of the TAA40101 qualification) so that they can be part of a team approach to gathering evidence and determining competency of the individual. The final assessment decision about competency would still be made by the individual with the required qualification (TAA40101) however it is the evidence gathering about performance which is the most time consuming.

It is not feasible to expect the small number of workplace trainers and assessors in the workplace and/or schools to manage this whole process particularly for the large number of students involved in part time or casual work.

2b. Identifying more flexible, innovative and/or alternative approaches to attaining a senior secondary certificate which support students to combine work and study.

The introduction by several states/territories for students to earn a Certificate of Education has assisted in opening up alternatives for students to gain credit towards this qualification. However, schools are still primarily focussed on assisting students to make a transition directly to universities with overall school planning focussed on supporting this pathway. When schools makes a conscious effort to cater for all transition pathways of students then there are more flexible, innovative and/or alternative approaches for students to attain a Certificate of Education.

ACPET recognises that schools cannot be expected to cater for every individual pathway required by students but would encourage the government to target additional financial support using a student-centred model so that individuals can purchase training from a provider of choice to meet their specific requirements.

At this stage, students accessing alternative education and training programs outside of scheduled classes, must either pay for it themselves, be part of a school/regional funded program or enter into a school-based Australian Apprenticeship or Traineeship so that User Choice funding covers the costs. Independent providers, particularly small and medium enterprises, are well-positioned to work with schools on flexible, time- responsive approaches provided that young people are assisted to purchase the training needed.

This approach of funding the student would help to facilitate the process of combining work and study as well as providing the opportunity to gain recognition of the skills and knowledge developed through part time or casual work.

2c. Support that may be required to assist young people combining work and study to stay engaged in their learning, especially where work and study intersects with income support.

Young people needing support on this matter, particularly when it involves income support, should be identified early so that a student's individual education plan can be modified accordingly. Unfortunately a larger number of students now fall into this category and schools are not able to provide the individual support, counselling and information students need to make suitable decisions.

Additional specialist funding based on certain criteria about students such as remote, indigenous, low socio-economic or a disability, would provide students (and parents/carers) with the choice to purchase the required programs and/or services they need to meet their circumstances.

2d. The potential impact on educational attainment (including the prospects for post-compulsory qualifications and workforce productivity).

Research clearly indicates the link between workforce productivity and qualifications particularly the need for established literacy and numeracy skills and being work ready. Students who do not attain qualifications tend to take on low-skilled jobs and are then caught up in a cycle of not being able to access and complete qualifications for highly-skilled jobs.

In the current unstable economic climate and the risk of unemployment rising, young people without employability and literacy and numeracy skills are at risk of becoming long term unemployed.

ACPET support the focus on early childhood education as a proactive move to stop this cycle, however it is also important that young people currently at the secondary level and who lack the required work-ready skills, are provided with the opportunities and 1:1 support required.

2e. The effectiveness of school-based training pathways and their impact on successful transitions, including opportunities for improvement (particularly in relation to pathways to employment for disadvantaged young people).

School-based Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships have proven to be very successful however not all students are able to access this pathway unless their school supports this approach or the parent/carer is able to negotiate on behalf of the student.

Although not perfect, the Australian Apprenticeship model combining study and work has stood the test of time in meeting the needs of employers and individuals looking to enter the workforce. The school-based Australian Apprenticeship program is based on this same model however, consideration of the school-based study students must complete as part of their post-compulsory education program (Certificate of Education) is not always taken into account when developing their program. As a result, a significant portion of students struggle to balance both of these commitments.

3. The way forward

ACPET supports reform in competition policy; streamlining regulation and commercial provision of traditionally government funded activities to achieve efficiencies and responsiveness. Individuals need a seamless education and training system with multiple entry and exit points as the ideal, flexible and responsive type of learning environment. Quality service delivery will also ensure strong outcomes and place Australia as a desirable destination of study for the global workforce of the future.

Despite a number of schools to work programs and very innovative approaches by a number of schools, the planning by schools for post-compulsory education and training has mainly remained unchanged with the use of a model with a focus on university preparation.

Funding and regulatory processes need to change to provide schools with more autonomy in their decision-making about the types of programs and services they offer students particularly where it involves combining school and work to result in successful youth transitions.

ACPET support a policy position where schools have the opportunity and autonomy to:

- Develop their own curriculum within a broad national framework;
- Establish their own staffing and employment arrangements;
- Regulate and control their own policy;
- Structure their budgets and operations to meet client needs; and
- Develop lawful enrolment policies supportive of their beliefs and values.

Independent (non-government funded) institutes have managed to develop a significant share of the education and training market – approximately 25% of domestic clients and 70% of the international student market. This growth has developed due to the independent provider’s ability to quickly adapt to the needs of clients (individuals and employers) and deliver the education and training required by the client. This ability indicates that it is the commercial, independent sector which is well-positioned to deliver the flexible and time responsive education and training needed to equip and further develop Australia’s workforce.

ACPET supports a national education and training sector driven by client-demand where individuals can choose which institution is best equipped to meet their needs. Our organisation advocates that all individuals should be financially supported (government funded) to gain an Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Certificate III level or equivalent qualification. Individuals should then be able to access income-contingent loans to gain higher level qualifications.

4. Contact

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