

Hobart Education Business Training Partnership response to Federal Inquiry into VET in Schools

Hobart Education Business Training Partnership, (HEBTP), is a partnership of school vocational education and training providers with industry and community within the Hobart region. The partnership has come together to work towards the coordination, development and promotion of vocational education and training in schools in the Hobart region. The partnership includes all systems of education: State Government, Independent and Catholic Education. The partnership has been in place since 1999.

The place of vocational education in schools, its growth and development and its effectiveness in preparing students for post school options.

Since 1995 vocational education and training in schools has developed in the three sectors of Hobart's schools in years 11 and 12. VET in schools in Hobart has developed extremely quickly with excellent consultation and links with industry. All VET in schools in Tasmania is based on the principles that:

- They lead to a vocational certificate
- They are supported by industry; and
- They involve a considerable element of structured workplace learning (120 -240 hours).

Program development and acceptance by industry varies depending on teachers involved, industry training culture and student interest. Generally, however, there is good support for VET in schools in the Hobart area.

HEBTP, annually conducts student destination research and customer feedback research. Some summaries from this research certainly support the effectiveness of the programs and identify issues that need consideration.

Customer Feedback research 2001

The types of issues covered within the student surveys included: why they are doing the VET program; how they found out about the program; was the program what they expected; the value of the on the job training and the off the job training and suggestions for improvement. The employer surveys covered issues such as: contact with the school; preparation of the student for the vocational placement; the attitude of the student; future employment of the student; benefits to the student and employer from the program and suggestions for improvement.

In total, 376 student surveys were received, 30 teacher surveys were received, 56 parent surveys were received, 26 industry surveys were completed and 122 employer surveys were completed.

Student Surveys

- 85% rated the Program at 'good' or 'very good' (*compared with 93% in 2000*)
- 80% of respondents plan to continue work in the industry of their VET Program (*63% in 2000*)
- 57% of respondents plan to undertake further training (*62% in 2000*)

Industry Surveys

- Average rating: 3.5 (between 'provides a basic introduction to working in this industry' and 'provides a good basic knowledge of the Industry') (*the average rating provided in 2000 was 4, 'provides a good basic **knowledge of the Industry**).*
- The 'best' things about VET in Schools were in the benefits provided for students, providing general work or industry experience. *Similar advantages were cited in 2000.*
- The 'worst' things about VET in Schools related to a lack of available placements, student expectations being too high, and VET is often seen as an easy option for students.

Teacher Surveys

- The 'best' things about the VET in Schools programs related to the employment opportunities they provide for students.
- Respondent's primary difficulty with VET in Schools is in the amount of paperwork required.

Employer Surveys

- Rating: 42% of employers provided a rating of 'good' and 27% provided a rating of 'very good. (*in 2000, 51% of employers provided a rating of 'good' and 27% rated the program at 'very good'*)

- The major gap identified by employers was that follow up visits from college staff to debrief on vocational placements were not undertaken in 37% of cases (*in 2000, 16% of employers had not received a follow up visit*).
- 24% of respondents *planned to employ any of the students placed with them, or have done so*, during 2001 (22% in 2000), and 33% would do so if they had an employment opportunity (68% in 2000).

Parent Surveys

- the major positive outcomes of the Programs were in the confidence gained by students (38%) and experience in the workplace (27%)
- 96% of respondents would encourage others to enrol in a VET in Schools Program.

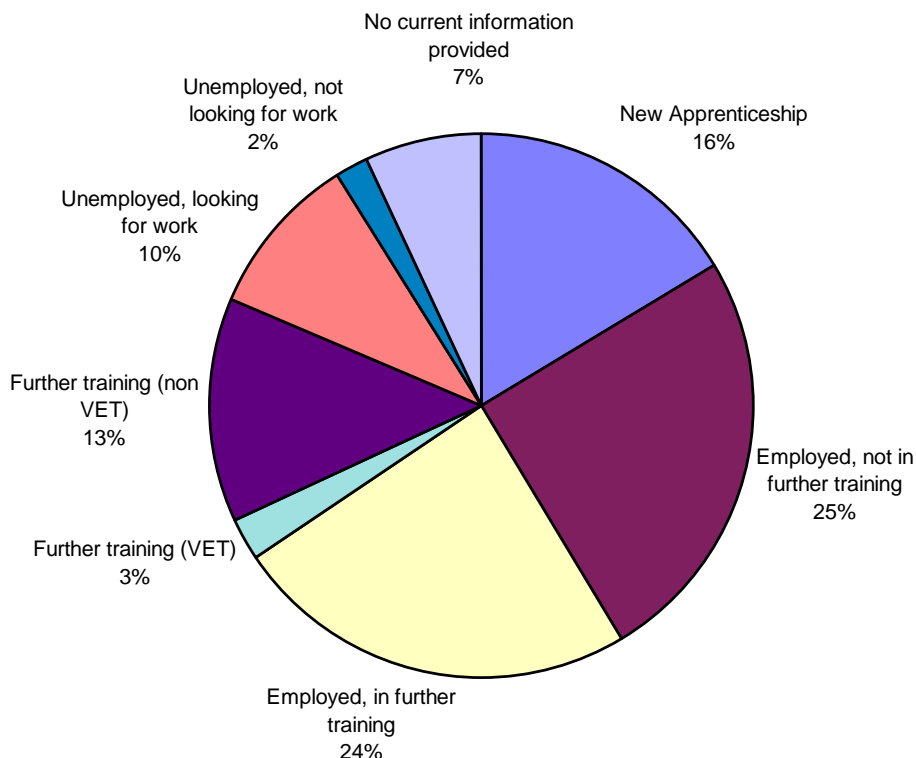
Student Destination research from year 2000 leavers.

- A total of 956 students out of 1223 year 11, 12 and 13 students enrolled in VET in Schools programs during 2000 were surveyed. This represents a response rate of 77% for VET in Schools enrolments in the Hobart region.
- 35 respondents (4%) identified as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander
- 18 respondents (2%) from non English speaking backgrounds were identified.
- 71 respondents (7%) were identified as having a disability.
- Of the total 956 respondents, 436 (46%) were female and 506 (53%) were male.
- Although there was only a 7% difference in enrolment numbers by gender, there were clear differences in enrolment choices for females and males.
- Females had a higher enrolment rate than males in: Business (80:14); Children’s Services (62:2); Aged Care (26:4); Retail Operations (44:14); and Tourism (32:6).
- Males had a higher enrolment rate than females in: Aquaculture (10:1); Automotive (63:3); Construction (56:0); Engineering (17:0); Furniture (19:4); Horticulture (34:9); Information Technology (68:3) and Recreation (27:8).

Figure 1 below illustrates the training and/or employment destinations of all respondents whose information forms part of this report.

- 56% of all respondents to the survey are undertaking further training
- 64% of all respondents to the survey are employed in some capacity

Figure 1: Overall Student Destinations



- The average percentage of total respondents going on to further training or employment in the industry area of study was 39%.
- The average percentage of total respondents going onto further training or employment in any area was 81%. This demonstrates that students use the competencies gained through VET in Schools programs in further employment, no matter what the industry area. That is, they acquire generic work skills, as well as industry specific skills.

The range of vocational education programs in schools

The following 11 schools are directly involved in HEBTP: Calvin Christian School, Claremont College, Elizabeth College, Fahan School, Guilford Young College, Hobart College, Rosny College, St Mary's College, St Michael's Collegiate School, The Friends' School and The Hutchins School. There are currently over 1000 Vocational Education and Training students in Schools in the Hobart area. There are over 800 employers involved in taking students on VET placements within HEBTP. There are over 120 teachers involved in teaching and coordinating the VET programs for the schools covered by HEBTP. The Hobart schools run programs in 21 industries and offers 44 qualifications.

The range of programs in the Hobart area is diverse. In Hobart the four state senior secondary colleges have the capacity to successfully run a broad range of VET programs in their own right. That is they have high enough numbers to be able to provide the areas of high student demand. The Catholic senior secondary college is also in a good position to provide a range of vocational courses and the independents schools provide a range through sharing with each other and accessing courses from other schools. So to date there has been little need to consider providing courses on a regional basis. However, in future, within the Hobart area, the capacity is limited for further development.

In 2003 all the schools involved in HEBTP have agreed to implement some regional programs in areas where either industry or student demand is low. These programs will be run by one school in the area, but able to be accessed by students who are attending any of the other HEBTP schools. Such programs will be in Electrotechnology, Financial Services, Agriculture, Laboratory Skills and Automotive Certificate 2.

With regards to the introduction of School Based New Apprenticeships(SBNA) the range is extremely limited and development very slow. Whether in Tasmania this is because there does not appear to be the industry demand or whether it is due to bureaucratic procrastination is unclear. Further consideration and development needs to occur in this area to ensure that SBNA's are available if they are in demand from employers.

The structure and delivery of vocational education programs in schools

Structure and delivery of the programs in Hobart is generally good with all programs including an on the job component of 120 to 240 hours. Variation for on the job periods depend on student and employer need including options such as one or two week blocks, one day per week etc. The Tasmanian system allows for students to do up to three two week placements with different employers to get a good feel for the industry.

The resourcing of vocational education programs in schools

There is certainly a significant resourcing issue with regards to VET in schools. There is no doubt that within the Tasmanian system there is not enough resources allocated to the running of a VET program. VET in schools is resource hungry for the following reasons: (many of these are not recognized in funding formulars)

- Resourcing problems with cost of actual running programs in terms of facilities required.
- Many of the VET courses take up two timetable lines and therefore must be one and half times more expensive.
- Teachers are required to be double qualified to meet the teaching qualifications and industry qualifications/competencies
- Meeting the AQTF requirements which are different from other school administrative requirements often means two sets of administration.
- Putting students in workplaces, visiting them and assessing them in workplaces takes a lot more time than running an ordinary school subject.

Teacher training

Teacher training is crucial in both areas of assessment and industry competencies. There is also a need to accept that where teachers do not and can not meet industry requirements experts can and should be brought in from industry. This is common practice in Hobart schools but not understood or recognized enough by other RTOs or employers.

The impact of vocational education on other programs

- VET programs are resource hungry and therefore there may be a view that they take resources from other programs.

- As more students want the option of doing a VET program timetabling may become more of an issue.
- There may also be an impact on other programs when students are out on placements and missing other subjects.
- As more pre-tertiary students take up VET courses there may be an impact on the tertiary entry system.
- The impact on VET pre-employment programs will involve a shift in the demand and age of students undertaking these programs.

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

- There is still a perception from other RTOs and lack of acceptance of the quality of VET in Schools.
- Based on need for schools to meet AQTF requirements there should be no difference.
- There are some factors that may make achieving the same outcomes harder within the school system, such as:
 - high numbers in the classroom,
 - students having to undertake their other school courses and activities,
 - maturity of students,
 - difficulty in obtaining and supporting employers where there is no contractual requirement and it is a voluntary system for employers to be involved,
 - teachers gaining and maintaining technical skills.
- While there should be no difference as all courses must ensure their students are meeting the standards required to get the designated qualification, traineeships which may offer the same level qualification outcome, but more time spent working on those skills, experiencing the workplace and its specific requirements will still produce a different outcome. There is still likely to be a difference between the school-based and other VET programs, but it should not relate to the actual competencies to achieve the qualification. VET in schools should be achieving very similar outcomes to the pre-employment programs traditionally run through TAFE.
- Where they are larger RTOs and have large numbers of students per class the ability for teachers to support the work placement experience is limited and often depends on the individual teacher's interest in spending time with employers. The school system relies on higher class numbers to ensure the course runs and therefore it is harder to ensure outcomes.
- Industry acceptance generally good as in Tasmania they have been true partners in the process from the start. However there are still pockets where students are compared with students from other VET and there is some dissatisfaction. Industry understanding and involvement in the system will be harder to achieve with the demise of State ITABs.
- In programs which are working well industry acceptance is excellent to the extent of employers specifically using VET in Schools to access and trial future employees on a regular basis. These examples occur where there is an extremely strong commitment between the employer and teacher.
- Industry acceptance varies from one industry area to another.
- While employers may have accepted VET in Schools and most participate in them there is still a significant proportion that believe that the student qualified through a VET RTO is a better qualified student. In fact that may be the case when comparing them with a trainee, however when compared to an "off-the-job" trained student through a VET RTO the VET in School student may be a better outcome having had up to 6 weeks vocational placement.

Vocational education in new and emerging industries

- New programs are harder to initiate now as resources are pushed to the limit
- Constantly consulting with industry and reviewing VET plans and industry plans to identify new industry areas that we should be working in.
- In some technical areas finding suitable teachers is more difficult for new industry areas. Not just an issue for VET in schools, this is for all VET.
- Trial of regional model given smaller new industry areas.
- In some ways it has been easier to introduce and develop VET in schools in industries where there is a traditional training culture. These industries are used to a strong employer/student relationship
- The demise of state ITABs will no doubt make exemplary industry responsive VET in Schools more difficult to maintain. State ITABs have worked very closely with HEBTP to assist in the coordination, monitoring and development of VET in Schools programs. Without state ITABs it will be up to HEBTP, on behalf of the schools to develop and create industry partnerships.

The accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for indigenous students

- All students that are in the Hobart area have access to vocational education in schools equally.
- All school involved have support systems established to assist indigenous students.