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# Inquiry into the role of Technical and Further Education system and its operation

A submission

Summary – it is important to look behind the TAFE bashing to the substance of the work that they do in our community

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## the development of skills in the Australian economy

- In the modern fast changing economy citizens require the ability to efficiently access new information, assimilate it and adapt it where necessary to meet their needs, they need to be able to problem solve and work quickly therefore the 'education' component in the acronym TAFE is becoming increasingly important – TAFEs have responded to this market demand by hybridizing and becoming mixed sector tertiary institutions. (This in itself problematizes the idea of 'inflexible, unresponsive TAFEs' that has been used as a criticism). Many technical skills can be, and often are, learnt on the job but we need TAFEs in the VET sector that develop learners who have been skilled to learn<sup>1</sup>. The growing trend to NAPLANise the school sectors can arguably be seen as working against the development of 'learning to learn' skills because of the inevitable focus on factual recall in such an environment where mass testing becomes the sole arbiter of educational achievement.
- It is in this area of slowly (at times) and relentlessly (at times – it's hard work) developing learners, that TAFEs have shown historically shown strength (refer attachment 1 Workplacenews, issue 48, April 2002)

the development of opportunities for Australians to improve themselves and increase their life and employment prospects

- This term of reference allows some space for the distinction between life and employment. This distinction is being collapsed by discourse that sees education purely in terms of skilling for a job.
- TAFEs accept students with a diverse range of disabilities (and meeting their needs in a real sense does not come cheaply). Some of these students (intellectually impaired from birth, with acquired head injuries through accidents, brain damage from substance abuse, mental health challenges, learning difficulties – I am not going to spend too much time on politically correct language in this area) in an increasingly fast-paced, skilled work environment face enormous problems obtaining “work”. Robots<sup>2</sup> increasingly do better what they are capable of. TAFE provides a meaningful space for these students to learn and, in as many cases as possible, move on to earn.
- “Tales from the trenches” – colleagues at the TAFE I work at have provided the following feedback on the ways their courses provide opportunities for Australians to improve themselves

## ❖ From the hospitality sector:

- ❖ We have helped students with disabilities transition to University and then get jobs in hospitality with support of disability organisations outside TAFE. One student Rochelle was able to graduate from Griffith like her other siblings and got a job in a Hotel canteen. Her parents were very happy with the support she received and the fact that she is able to have a 'normal' lifestyle and be independent. We also currently have a number of students with mental disabilities, ADD etc. who are able to gain useful practical skills to help them get jobs.
- ❖ We also help students transition to university. A number of these students have dropped out of Uni due to the isolation there and when they return with a cohort from SBIT are able to complete the Bachelor.
- ❖ We have students doing time at Government House and on scholarships to Disney in the US.

## ❖ From the aged care sector:

- ❖ At Southbank Institute of Technology we have established a pathway for people who wish to work in the health industry. Students are encouraged to do a Certificate III Aged care which incorporates 5 subjects of the Diploma of Nursing. This in turn provides one year off from the Registered nurse course at UNI. The Certificate III course also provides 5 subject credits for the Cert IV Leisure & Health Course. People who do the Cert III Aged Care and who wish to work in community can add another three subjects for the Cert III Home and Community Care Cert. Also we offer people who have a Cert III Aged Care the opportunity to do a Cert IV Allied Health Assistant course which provides needed assistants to Allied Health professionals.
- **Pathways – at our flexible and responsive TAFE we have developed 250 pathways to allow our students to improve themselves and increase their life and employment prospects – extract below from our website.**

## Pathways to university

Southbank Institute has a wide range of courses that can help further your study options and gain entry to university. This includes a new partnership with [University of Sunshine Coast \(USC\)](#) to provide a number of bachelor degrees at SBIT.

A diploma, advanced diploma or associate degree qualification could provide you with an **alternative entry option to university**. You'll not only get practical **work-ready skills** through your diploma studies, you'll also gain **theoretical knowledge** during your university degree. With a university pathway you finish with **two recognised qualifications** – giving you great appeal to employers and a potential edge in a competitive job market.

Pathways to university are:

- an excellent **bridge between school and uni**
- a great stepping stone to uni if you started working straight from school
- a **second chance at entry to uni** if you don't have the OP needed for direct entry
- an option if you've been **raising a family** and want to **gain new work-based skills** and carry on to **study at uni**
- an opportunity to get ahead and **find a job** using your **diploma work-based skills** while studying at uni.

Partnerships and strong links have been developed with many of Queensland's **well-respected and leading universities**.



## the operation of a competitive training market

- It is worth noting that TAFE institutes are not necessarily opposed to greater contestability, the argument is that current governance and business models, and cost structures, reduce their capacity to compete. In addition there needs to be more explicit recognition of TAFE's implicit community service obligations.<sup>3</sup>
- competition can enhance delivery but among the dangers are:
  1. unscrupulous operators who cherry pick lucrative tenders and/or win tenders but go bust or deliver training on the cheap (there is ample evidence of the dodgy providers in States in Australia where there has been an unseemly rush to open the market to competition without robust checks and balances).
  2. imposition of administrative checks and balances to counter the dodgy delivers (who have devalued the integrity of the sector as a whole) that then take up huge amounts of teacher time that should be spent preparing, delivering and providing feedback to students and enhancing professional practice by staying abreast of the latest research on improved teaching methods.
  3. pressure on deliverers to reduce 'costly' support services (libraries, disability support officers, counselling

services, literacy/numeracy support)<sup>4</sup> to compete successfully in the tendering process.

## Further reading

1. <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2599.html>

Towards a culture of scholarly practice in mixed-sector institutions

*Melanie Williams, Fleur Goulding, Teri Seddon*

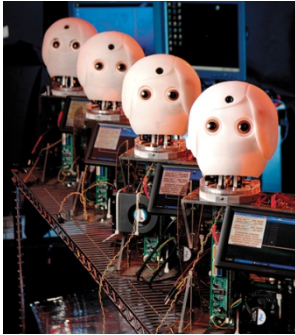
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2. [http://chronicle.com/article/The-New-Industrial-Revolution/138015/?cid=cr&utm\\_source=cr&utm\\_medium=en](http://chronicle.com/article/The-New-Industrial-Revolution/138015/?cid=cr&utm_source=cr&utm_medium=en)

The New Industrial Revolution

A coming wave of robots could redefine our jobs. Will that redefine us?

*Jeffrey R. Young*



3. Queensland Post-secondary Education and training review final Report, November 2010. The Allen Consulting Group

4. Barriers and facilitators affecting course completions by apprentices and trainees with disabilities

*Errol Cocks, Stian Thoresen*

Centre for Research into Disability and Society, Curtin Health Innovation Research Institute, and School of Occupational Therapy and Social Work, Curtin University.