



SCHOOLS INDUSTRY POLICY

PRINCIPLES OF SCHOOLS INDUSTRY POLICY

The education a young person receives not only prepares him/her for adulthood and participation in society, but also contributes to the skills that are needed by industry. Business, industry and work underpin the standard of living enjoyed by all Australians. A skilled, flexible, motivated workforce contributes to the economic growth that assists in achieving this goal. A school system that helps meet the particular needs of industry is integral to achieving competitiveness.

Cooperative and strategic partnerships between employer and educational stakeholders are necessary to achieve these goals at the local, regional, State/Territory and national levels.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

ACCI supports education and training policies which:

- improve education and training as a demand-driven system which is specifically aligned to industry needs;
- maximise education and training pathways from school to the workplace;
- focus on nationally-consistent outcomes and achieve standards which are comparable to international standards of best practice;
- provide a good general education;
- respond to the need for students to undertake workplace learning programs which develop links with industry and create pathways to further training and employment;
- improve, and regularly test on the basis of a nationally agreed and consistent basis, literacy and numeracy standards;
- strengthen the focus on sound basics, such as literacy and numeracy, at primary school level;
- acknowledge, develop and assess in a contextual manner, employability skills;
- improve and integrate careers education, key competencies and enterprise education principles into the education and training system;
- provide the adoption of an enterprising culture, particularly by young Australians;
- support articulation arrangements across the school, vocational education and training and higher education sectors; and
- promote equality of education opportunities and options for groups with special needs.

THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

1. Learning and the Acquisition of Skills

A Sound Education

All students should have access to a sound education in the basics with emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, which are regularly tested and meet national benchmarks. A good general education underpins the skills needed for all post-compulsory school options including the area of emerging technologies.

Employability Skills

The report, *Employability Skills for the Future*, identified an *Employability Skills Framework* comprising a set of personal attributes and eight key skill areas that are required by employers to gain employment or establish an enterprise, to progress within an enterprise or expand employment capability, so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise and strategic directions.

Employability skills are acquired from a variety of sources including the home, school, the community, sport and through exposure to the workplace. The acquisition of these skills is developmental and they can be transferred from one context to another.

There should be no formal teaching, assessment or reporting on the personal attributes. The eight key skills areas need to be made explicit to students through pedagogy, assessment, recording and reporting. Students should be encouraged to record their progress in developing employability skills in different contexts. These records would ideally be lodged in an e-portfolio and contain a mixture of formal and informal records.

Enterprise Education

Enterprise Education covers a range of areas, which are not clearly defined. It involves educating individuals to be more enterprising, entrepreneurship, simulated business development learning, understanding the world of work and preparation for the possibility of self-employment.

Activities that are suitable enterprise education activities allow students to:

- run their own company through a computer simulation of the Australian economy;
- undertake an innovative training strategy for the development of business skills and business thinking;
- establish and run their own business with the help of a real business partner and a network of firms which together generate a simulated market economy;
- undertake a structured one week work placement during which they are confronted with real life challenges, requiring them to use enterprising skills and a total quality management approach;
- undertake five days work experience during which time they receive training in continuous improvement tools and processes using activities such as data gathering, data analysis, problem solving and planning; and
- be exposed to enterprise days in which businesses, schools and the community are linked.

In addition, innovation and enterprise go hand in hand. Unless people have the ability to turn innovative ideas into marketable and profitable products (i.e. have the enterprise skills to make it happen) then there will be little value added or the opportunities will be lost to Australia as the 'innovators' seek support elsewhere. Enterprise education is critical if we are to make the most of the investment being made in innovation skills.

Simulated Learning

There is a role for simulated learning as a pedagogical approach within the school curriculum. In terms of vocational education and training, there is a place for simulated learning to supplement opportunities where on-the-job learning with employers is not available or only partially available. However, employers prefer student learning on vocational education and training to be completed in real workplaces.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools

It is of vital importance that industry is put in the driving seat where VET or other schools-industry initiatives are involved and that there is a move away from the main emphasis being on the provider. In the past providers have dictated what was going to be delivered whether it met industry needs or not.

VET is VET

No matter where VET is delivered, whether it is in schools or in a post-school training environment, the same standard of delivery should be employed. Where schools are unable to meet the same standards as those provided by TAFE or private providers, alternative arrangements should be made through partnerships or outsourcing approaches.

Assessment is a critical issue in the delivery of VET. Teachers not qualified in the areas being assessed should not undertake assessment.

On the Job Learning

On the job learning is a key component of preparing students for the world of work both through the acquisition of specific skills and more broadly through a general exposure to the expectations of employers.

Employers highly value on-the-job learning because of the learning styles available, the direct relevance of the skills acquired and the assurance of standards of the skills imparted. From an employer perspective, the quality delivery of VET in Schools is not possible without an on-the-job learning component.

Schools as Registered Training Organisations and Certificate Levels

In terms of the delivery of VET, ACCI and members do not support processes that allow for the automatic and blanket registration of schools as RTOs. Arrangements under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) to ensure consistency of standards for RTOs is therefore of great concern to industry.

Employers are, in general, comfortable with school students accessing Certificate I qualifications through VET in Schools programs. There are some concerns about Certificate II qualifications (because of traineeship implications) particularly in trade areas where on-the-job training is vital. Serious reservations have been expressed about schools offering students Certificate III qualifications in industry areas including the trades and Information Technology.

Training Packages

Training Packages are a critically important element of VET in Schools. Industry knowledge and competencies that characterise Training Packages ensure a synergy between industry requirements and the education and training received by students.

It is imperative that Boards of Studies do not alter units of competence or qualification requirements as outlined in the approved Training Packages. This will lead to dissatisfaction by students and employers on outcomes.

School Based New Apprenticeships

School Based New Apprenticeships (SBNAs) provide an important pathway for those students seeking an employment outcome while they are completing their schooling. The purpose of SBNAs is to provide direct links to employment at the end of an individual's schooling. SBNAs provide part of the suite of options that provide Australian youth with flexibility in their transition from school.

Australian Technical Colleges

Australian Technical Colleges (ATCs) play a role in providing prestige opportunities for quality students to undertake an employment pathway in Years 11 and 12. ATCs contribute in part to the solution to Australia's skill shortages by targeting identified skills needs. ATCs provide additional benefits to studying an SBNA in school or to the VET in Schools option.

2. Systems Support

Careers Information, Advice, Services and Products

This area includes career advisory services, labour market information, recruitment requirements, skill shortages, job guide information and the promotion of post-compulsory options.

Australia should develop a consistent and comprehensive system of ensuring the delivery of quality careers information and advice to secondary school students across all school sectors (i.e. government, Catholic and independent).

Relevant, up to date career information also plays a critical role in addressing skill shortages. Careers resources and materials have been developed by industries for this purpose. Means of disseminating this information through closer links with school principals will assist in the delivery of industry-developed information being available to students. Information about economic growth within the region needs to be incorporated along with products that are developed for students and parents. There is a role for industry to build capacity through information and service delivery.

Teacher Release to Industry

The quality of delivery of VET in Schools and enterprise education to school students is affected in part by the teacher's mastery of content. In some instances teachers delivering VET courses to students have little, outdated or no experience within any industry let alone the industry area they are meant to be teaching. This is further complicated by the ageing profile of the teacher workforce.

ACCI favours a system where teachers can be released to industry to gain industry relevant experience. Careers advisers should also be given release to industry opportunities.

Teacher Training

ACCI and members strongly support the introduction of a compulsory unit of study into teacher training in relation to vocational education about vocational education. In addition, all student teachers should know about and understand employability skills. An overview of careers information systems would also be an important element of teacher education. These three elements should be compulsory.

Alternative models to fast-tracking entry into teaching and contract delivery of content should be explored. However, it is essential that the quality and standards of teaching remain intact.

Commonwealth/State Arrangements

Education is primarily a State/Territory responsibility but there is a role for the Commonwealth to take in ensuring a degree of national consistency, sufficient resourcing to allow the offering of VET choices, the collection of data and research and analysis.

Consultation with industry through formal and informal structures that provide advice to Ministers will assist the education sector in setting priorities and ensuring demand responsiveness.

3. Exit and Beyond

Student Records of Achievement

Clear and consistent reporting on schools and students across Australia, incorporating objective performance measures is a vital ingredient of effective parental involvement.

Reporting against the eight key employability skills should be adopted and delivered to Australian parents. National consistency and reporting in plain English on these skills would assist students, parents and employers during schooling, but especially in the transition to work.

Transition Plans

It is desirable that students are given the opportunity to develop career options and to plan their transition from school.

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