PREPARING STUDENTS FOR FUTURE PATHWAYS

A Report on the Implementation of Pathways Programs in Schools

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Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

1. In 1991 the Youth Research Centre (YRC) conducted a survey which sampled 2,500 students in Year 9 and Year 11 at seventeen schools throughout Australia. While the overall picture concerning the students' experiences was a consistently positive one, the *majority* of the students, particularly at Year 11, tended to be 'uncertain' or 'less hopeful' about the future and in fact

    > the *closer* the students were to *dis*continuing their education the *more marked* the indicators were about negativity and uncertainty.

2. At the beginning of 1992 the YRC contracted to undertake a follow-up to its survey, with a view to developing curriculum projects to address the issues of negativity identified in five of the schools. This follow-up was termed the 'Pathways Project' because of its main aim:

    > *to provide a model for other schools seeking to address the impact of the economic climate on school leavers. Given the difficulties associated with jobs available for young people, the question will be posed: how can schools better assist students to negotiate successfully their particular paths to adulthood?*

3. A review process of consultation and observation was adopted at each of the five schools participating in the Pathways Project. The following five items for development have been identified as a result of that review.

    Diversity of Pathways. School completion now needs to be linked quite clearly to a diversity of pathways. To achieve this, the curriculum design adopted within schools needs to provide a sufficiently broad field of studies so that *a range of 'post-school' options* come to be seen as both attainable and desirable outcomes of a complete secondary education. There are two major issues of concern here. First, there is the need to challenge the assumption that retention to Year 12 should be interpreted predominantly in relation to the 'university degree pathway'. Secondly, there is the question of the ways in which collaborative arrangements could be developed with other institutions such as local TAFE colleges for 'joint enrolment' or 'cross-crediting' of students or for 'feeder institution' status.

    Pastoral Care Policy. The issue of pastoral care is one that has emerged as particularly significant in meeting the increasing demands of the school curriculum and the greater diversity of the school population. In general, there appears to be a combination of three different approaches being undertaken. All the schools to varying degrees see pastoral care as a basic responsibility of *all* teachers; most also make provision for 'home-room' teachers and counsellors; and some place increasing emphasis on the role of Year Level Coordinators as a key element of pastoral care. Whatever combination is adopted, in terms of this project the major need is to have *an effective and clearly communicated policy* with regard to pastoral care, including consultation with the *students themselves* about their perceived needs.

    Work Education. Clearly the issue of work education is one that has direct relevance to the Pathways Project. In simple terms, work education is approached within the five schools in two different ways: as a largely 'job-sampling' exercise or as a more structured 'developmental' process. The 'job-sampling' model appears to be the more common of the two, but the Project staff advocate the adoption of a developmental process: a *structured* program that links work experience to the existing curriculum; and an understanding of 'job-placement' in terms of *broader* work competencies rather than specific narrow job-sampling skills.

    Co-responsibility. Increasingly schools will face two challenges to their existing ethos: a larger student population of *young adults* at the senior level, and further outside pressure for students to

learn how to make 'open-ended' or *flexible choices* and to act on the consequences. This means that each school will need to examine ways in which its delivery of the curriculum, its pastoral care policies and its work education program actually involve students in an *experience* of decision-making and promotes their sense of co-responsibility within the school.

Transition Networks. The 'crossover' from one type of educational institution (school) to another (TAFE or a university), or from the world of school to the world of work, is not as smooth or clearly-defined as the pathways image tends to suggest. Some continuing commitment by schools is needed to assist their students in this 'crossover' into adult life. In each of the schools there exist informal networks between former students, their teachers, their parents, their siblings and even their peers who are still at school. These need to be formalised and followed up in a more systematic way.

4. For the implementation of this Project, the issues of Diversity of Pathways and Co-responsibility have been singled out for consideration by each of the schools. In effect, these two key issues incorporate the other issues identified in the course of the Project and establish a firm basis for addressing the 'new agenda' of post-compulsory education. There remain, however, some unresolved issues associated with the concept of 'pathways' and these will need to be addressed if it is to have validity beyond the level of metaphor and nothing more.

5. All five schools have faced up to the issues raised during the Project and have undertaken as from 1993 to implement changes in their established programs which take the notion of 'pathways' seriously. In doing so they have embarked on what amounts to a genuinely pioneering venture to establish a model of implementation for other schools that addressees what is a completely new agenda for all Australian schools.

Introduction

Since the early 1980s, there has been a significant change in public attitudes and official policies towards school participation rates and this has been reflected in a substantial shift in the proportion of young people continuing through to finish their schooling. Nationally two-thirds of students now go on to final year, and in Victoria the number actually completing high school increased from 42% in 1983 to 79% in 1991. School completion has now become the experience of the majority of the relevant age-group.

At the same time, dramatic changes have taken placed with regard to the employment prospects of young Australians. It is not surprising, then, that they are very aware that they face an uncertain future. At a national level this is obvious from the regular surveys conducted by the Department of Employment Education and Training. In 1988, for example, their disquiet was unmistakable - 67 per cent thought it would be very or fairly difficult to find a full-time job, and an overwhelming 92 per cent saw it as fairly or very difficult to find an 'ideal' job (ANOP, 1988). Their assessment was an astute one. By 1991, when the official unemployment rate in Australia for all age-groups had passed the 10 per cent mark, the unemployment rate for 15 - 19 year olds had already exceeded 30 per cent - one in three was bound to miss out.

These two sets of pressures on students in their final years of schooling pose serious problems for schools in such aspects as their curriculum organisation and their pastoral care programs. This report is the result of one attempt to address some of these issues on a comparative basis.

The report is divided into six main sections: a discussion of the context of the research; a clarification of the aims of the project; an examination of innovative programs; a descriptive account of the participating schools; a reflection on Pathways issues; and an implementation statement.

Section 1. The Context of the Research

Background Evidence

The 1988 ANOP survey for the Department of Employment, Education and Training suggests that there has been a significant shift in young people's attitudes since 1984 concerning retention rates. In 1984, 69 percent of 15-24 year olds were in favour of encouraging students to stay longer at school, whereas in 1989 the percentage had risen sharply to a level of 82 percent. If completing years 11 and 12 at a TAFE college was added as an option a further 12 percent would have approved (ANOP, 1988:52).

This very positive expectation is confirmed by Braithwaite's study of disadvantaged students and their parents. 92 percent of parents and 94 percent of students believed it was extremely or moderately important to continue to the end of Year 12 because of the importance of getting 'a good education' (Braithwaite, 1988:23).

This change in attitudes - and the policy euphoria about a 'clever country' that goes with it - needs to come to terms with a hidden consequence of retention rate policy - the prospect of 'forced retention'. It is accepted now that one of the major reasons for the shift in attitude towards retention rates has been the collapse of the youth labour market (Power, 1984; Youth Research Centre, 1990).   Part of the improvement in school participation is due to the foreclosing of alternatives outside school for a number of students. It is likely that there are students at present who continue with their schooling who would have preferred to leave if the economic circumstances had been different.

The 1982 CTEC report, *Learning and Earning*, suggested that a number of factors influenced retention rates, including what it termed a 'shelter effect'. This means that some of the retention was due to a lack of sufficient or suitable jobs and that students who would otherwise have left school were filling in time by staying at school until they did find a job (CTEC, 1982:50). This suggestion was partly supported by an ACER study on school retention (Ainley et al, 1984).

Power (1984) conducted a study on school retention in South Australia in the period prior to the sharp improvement from 1982 onwards in retention rates. He argued that 'the more academically oriented the school, the higher its retention rate', and that 'there is a strong tendency for better educated parents to send their children to academically oriented secondary schools' (121). He added

> In a country which is not noted for its high level of commitment to education and to intellectual-cultural pursuits, retention rates will not change rapidly. If retention rates do increase it may only be partly for educational reasons (1984:124).

Although his prediction about the change in retention rates was wrong, his comment about the reasons for the increase raises an important issue, and seems to confirm the remarks made above about the element of 'forced retention' of 'would-be' school-leavers. If the improvement in retention rates is only partly due to educational reasons, it seems likely that there will be a concomitant increase in the levels of dissatisfaction among the less academically-inclined students.

The Survey of Seventeen Schools

In the first half of 1991 the Youth Research Centre conducted a survey for a Schools' Committee representing a number of Catholic secondary schools (Dwyer, 1991). It sampled students in Year 9 and Year 11 at seventeen schools in Victoria (8), New South Wales (2), South Australia (4), Northern Territory (1), and Western Australia (2).

The research was originally inspired by the Eckersley (1988) report on *Casualties of Change: The Predicament of Youth in Australia*. In line with the theme of 'casualties of change', an assumption was made at the data analysis stage that students' feelings about the future provide a suitable starting-point for an understanding of their experience of change. There was definite evidence within all the schools that there were divergent patterns of response for two distinct sub-groups among the students: these sub-groups were called the Optimist and the Less Optimist.

With regard to their experience of school, the responses from the two groupings at both year levels presented clear contrasts. In their relationships with teachers, for example, the Optimist grouping received - or perceived - *much more positive treatment* from teachers. Thus, those in that group were more inclined to say that their teachers

'take a personal interest' in them	(41% versus 34%),
give them 'enough encouragement'	(45% versus 38%),
and give 'helpful classes'	(37% versus 29%).

Those in the Less Optimist grouping were more likely to say that:

teachers 'insist too much on rules'	(45% versus 38%)
and give classes that are 'often boring'	(46% versus 27%).

When it came to identifying their personal troubles, the one issue that emerged as a *common* 'trouble' for most students was 'getting a good job in the future'. The percentage response for the Less Optimists was nevertheless higher than for the Optimists (68% versus 60%). In the final question the students were asked to identify ways in which they could be prepared for the future and the suggestions offered in response repeatedly raised the issue of 'relevance' particularly with regard to the world of work.

The Transition Factor

The responses to the survey presented a strange paradox. While the overall picture concerning the students' experiences of school, friendships and family life was a consistently positive one, there were definite contrasts and signs of negativity on questions concerning the future. In fact, the *majority* of the students, particularly at Year 11, were 'uncertain' or 'less hopeful' about the future most of the time. Those in Year 11 who were reluctant about continuing their education (who were termed the Transitionists) emerged as even more uncertain and lacking in hope.

This result was significant, because an examination of the school to work transition was *not* part of the original purpose of the survey of seventeen schools. The aim was a more general one of uncovering the needs of the students and assessing the ways in which contemporary social change was having a negative impact on their lives. It was only when an attempt was made to explain the divergence of response between the Optimist and Less Optimist groupings that their *common* concern about the lack of jobs became linked to the levels of negativity revealed on a range of *other* issues. What this meant was that :

the *closer* the students were to *dis*continuing their education the *more marked* the indicators were about negativity and uncertainty.

This became very obvious when the average level of 'positive' response for the schools-as-a-whole, was compared with that of the Optimist group, the Less Optimist group and then with the Year 11 Transitionists (those who were reluctant about continuing their education). The following chart displays these obvious contrasts in levels of 'positivity'.

Chart 1

Positivity Index
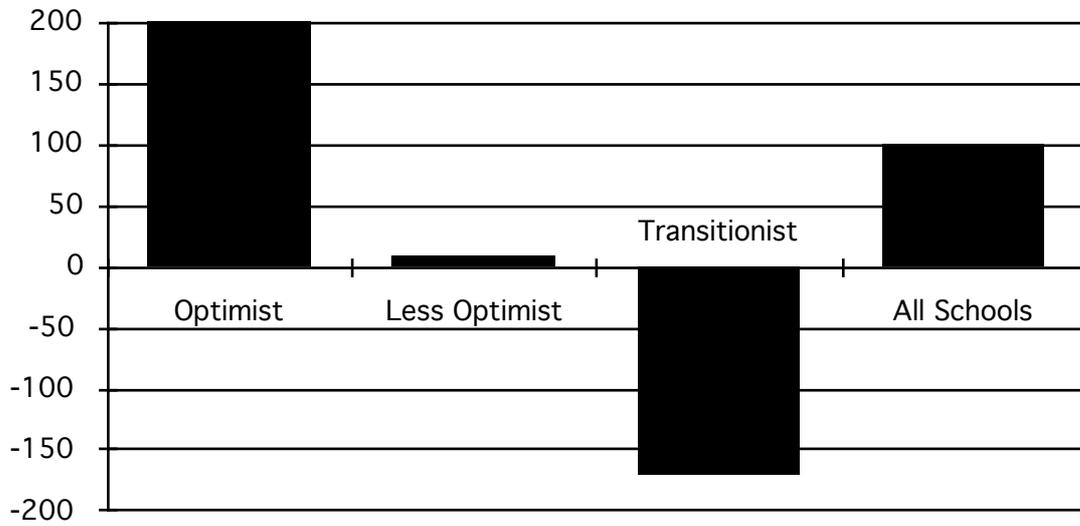
The evidence from this survey of seventeen schools has wider implications concerning curriculum organisation in each school. To what extent, for example, does the evidence about a 'transition factor' suggest that the curriculum and approach to *all* students would benefit from the findings of the survey on this particular dimension of students' experience? If it is true that a 'transition factor' is having some impact on the lives of all students, but to varying degrees, does this raise questions for each school about how best to lessen that impact and thus assist students to negotiate positively and successfully their particular pathways to adult life?

Section 2. The Pathways Project

At the beginning of 1992 the Youth Research Centre contracted to undertake a follow-up to the *Survey of Seventeen Schools*. The reason for the follow-up was to assist a representative sample of the schools in developing curriculum projects to address the major student needs identified in the survey.

Aim

One of the schools was funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) to sponsor the project. In this report it is referred to as the 'Pathways Project' because of its main aim:

> *to provide a model for other schools seeking to address the impact of the economic climate on school leavers. Given the difficulties associated with jobs available for young people, the question will be posed: how can schools better assist students to negotiate successfully their particular paths to adulthood?*
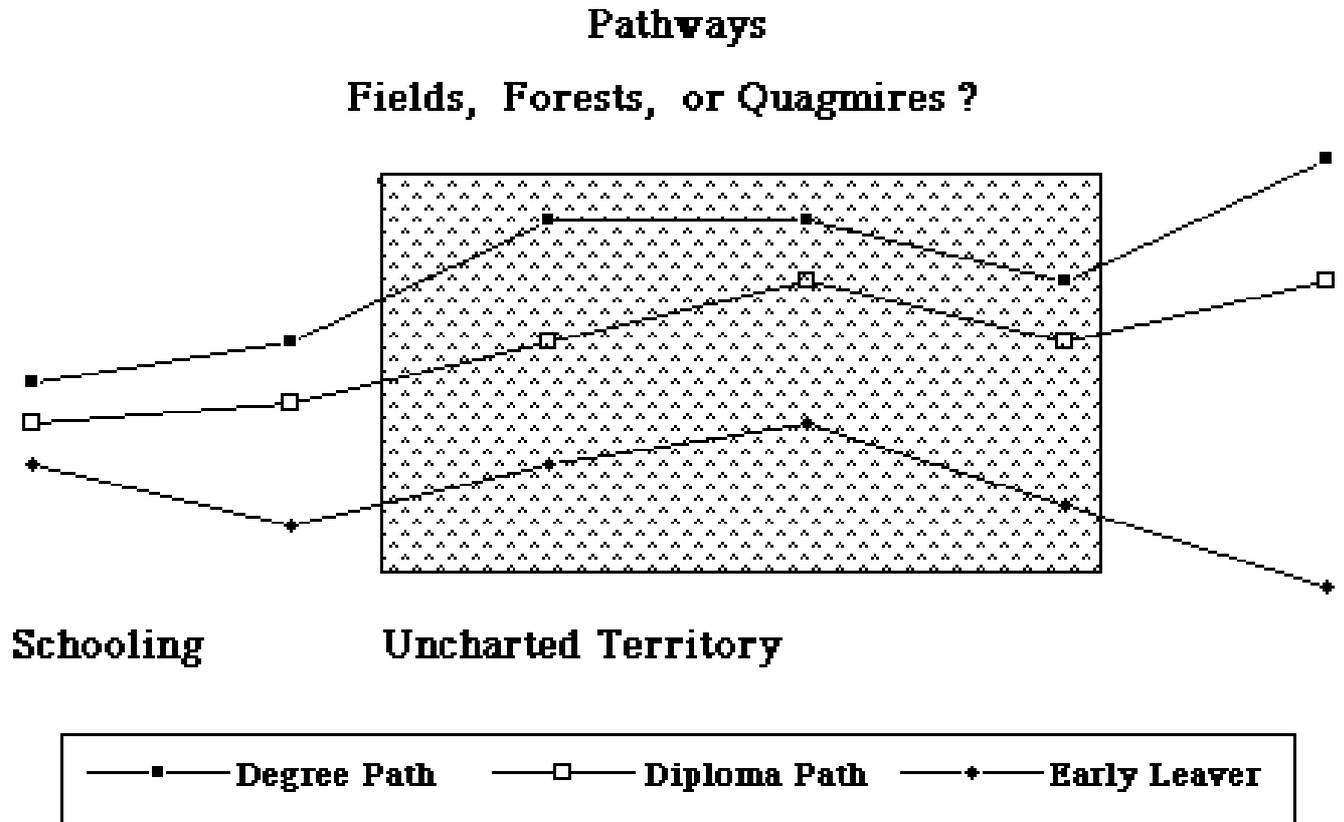
Methodology

In summary form, the methodologies adopted in the project were as follows:

> a re-analysis of the 1991 survey evidence for the five schools, paying particular attention to the open-choice student responses;

> on-site non-participant observation of the school context, organisation and social environment by YRC staff;

> an interview and review program with staff and students at the school on unmet needs and appropriate initiatives;

> a research review of innovative programs in other school settings in Australia, and the application of these findings to the schools participating in the Project.

The purpose of the project was to find ways of preparing students for, and supporting them through, the initial stages of their transition from school into post-school settings. In simplified form, there were three major options facing students after their schooling: pathways through higher education into some kind of credentialled occupation or professional career; pathways within apprenticeship, training or certificated programs in preparation for some specialised or skill-based occupation; and direct entry into the workforce or adult life without immediately undertaking further studies. The following chart represents in diagram form the various 'pathway' options for students in their transition through post-compulsory education into adult careers. The diagram also indicates that the particular focus of the Project was to concentrate on *the initial crossover* into the transition phase.

Chart 2

Pathways

Fields, Forests, or Quagmires ?

Schooling　　　　Uncharted Territory

———■———Degree Path　　———□———Diploma Path　　———♦———Early Leaver

What the Pathways Project aimed to do was to intervene in this process. It sought to provide some structured support and guidance so that the students, whatever the choices they make, have the appropriate skills, are aware of the context they are moving into and what they will need to make a success of their particular path, or how they can change course if they decide to reconsider their options. For this to be achieved, the schools would need to establishes linkages between the students' in-school and post-school development.

Section 3. Innovative 'Pathways' Programs

In his 1984 study on school retention rates Power suggested that changes in the structures and programs of schools may marginally reduce levels of dissatisfaction among those students who were less likely to persevere with schooling. However, he doubted whether such changes were likely 'to have a major impact on school retention rates' (Power, 1984: 124). Braithwaite's study, conducted in 1986, of disadvantaged students and their parents, presented a different view. It indicated a very high level of support for curriculum innovations as a means towards improved retention rates and student success (Braithwaite, 1988:24).

Other studies on innovative school programs support Braithwaite's view and demonstrate, for example, that many of the attempts to reorganise the traditional curriculum in consultation with the students themselves have had a positive impact on student performance (Ainley, 1984; Batten, 1989; Holdsworth, 1986). This is confirmed by reports on particular programs and schools by Middleton (1982), White (1984), Wilson and Wyn (1989), Johnston and White (1989) and Wilson and Harford (1989).

This research evidence reveals that elements of diversity and flexibility are important if curriculum improvements are to have positive and lasting effects. This is recognised in the policies advocated by the Schools Commission in a number of major reports such as 'the adaptive school' in *Schooling for 15 and 16 Year Olds* (1980) and 'the flexible secondary school' in *In the National Interest* (1987).

The Finn Report

Shortly after the *Survey of Seventeen Schools* was completed, a major national report, *Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education and Training* (referred to as the Finn Report), was published. This report (Finn, 1991) is particularly relevant to the Pathways Project because it addresses many of the issues that are the subject-matter of the Project. In particular, the Finn Report proved to be a useful source for identifying the particular attributes and skills required to prepare students for effective pathways into adulthood. A comparison of the Finn Report to other documentation and studies led to the choice of five indicators in particular for measuring the 'pathways' dimension of effective school practice:

> *student co-operative practices*
> *student decision-making experience and skills*
> *student development of flexible competencies*
> *teacher pastoral care and flexibility*
> *transition networking.*

Student Co-operative Practices. Reports from the OECD concerning the impact of new technology on current work practices highlight the importance of teamwork (OECD, 1985: 2). This emphasis has been incorporated into the 'key areas of competence' proposed by the Finn Report. It identified six areas (1991: 57-8):

> language and communication
> mathematics
> scientific and technological understanding
> cultural understanding
> problem solving
> personal and interpersonal.

Some of these areas are more directly concerned with the actual content or subject areas of the curriculum, while others are related to the *processes* of learning and curriculum organisation and practice. Clearly, the language and communication competencies are relevant to the issue of co-operative practices, but more specifically the area of the personal and interpersonal identifies 'negotiating and team skills' as an essential attribute. This confirms the findings of Australian studies on effective school practice which demonstrate the impact that co-operative learning styles have on increased student participation (Middleton, 1982; Wilson and Wyn, 1987). As the Finn Report indicates:

> Young people themselves emphasise the role of senior secondary school in providing 'a good education' which they associate principally with basic skills (especially literacy and numeracy)

and with enhanced employment prospects. Research among former Year 12 students indicates that the most highly valued aspects of Year 12 study in retrospect were:

> communication skills;
> capacity to work both independently and collectively; and
> capacity to organise time and plan tasks (Finn, 1991: 116).

Decision-making Experience and Skills. Whatever path students choose to follow, they need to develop their capacity to manage the uncertainties of current social and economic changes affecting their generation. This in itself indicates the importance of acquiring decision-making skills prior to entering upon adult life. It is also related to changes in work practices. A number of industry studies have recognised this need, as the Kirby Report suggests (Kirby, 1985: 59). This is an approach that has been advocated at a management level within manufacturing industry in Australia (see Dix, 1985: 6) and which is confirmed by a review of the international research literature:

> In summary, there is considerable evidence that supports the view that the potential allocative contribution of workers to productive efficiency requires work organisations that create challenges for workers and encourage their participation in decision-making at appropriate levels (Levin, 1984: 14).

Recent changes in workplace practices, particularly as a result of the growing use of computer technologies, suggest that the organisation of work around the planning, management and completion of specific projects is becoming more important at many different levels within professional and technical fields. It is not surprising then that the Finn Report has listed under its key areas of competence a capacity for 'problem solving', which includes skills of analysis, critical thinking, decision making, creative thinking and skill transfer to new contexts. The organisation of the curriculum and of the classroom needs to provide adequate opportunity for student participation and negotiation in order to develop their skills in this area.

Development of Flexible Competencies. Both because of the uncertainties about available career options for young people and also because of the prospect of multiple career paths in the course of adult life in the future, students need to develop a self-image based on a grasp of a range of abilities. They need to carry with them into adult life the necessary flexibility to choose alternative paths or to change their field of work as economic conditions alter.

There are many uncertainties associated with the initial career choices made by young people. They need to be encouraged to define their 'work-related' attributes in a broad way rather than confining themselves to some narrow preconception of what it is they want to do or are suited for.

> For most young people the process of making a career choice is a complex and lengthy one and will necessarily vary from individual to individual. Each individual's perception of their future will change countless times throughout their school life depending upon a multitude of factors such as influence from others, experiences through part-time work, achievements in a particular discipline at school or simply through a process of growing up (Finn, 1991: 155-6).

The need to view 'work-related' attributes in a broad and flexible fashion has been given strong support from within the Australian business community. In a submission for the Finn Report, the leading business organisations emphasised competencies that would give school-leavers the necessary flexibility to turn their hand to a range of different tasks and responsibilities rather than confine them to a narrowly-defined occupational role.

> In a joint paper to this review, six leading employer organisations argued that the principle role of schools should be to provide students not so much with narrow, occupation-specific skills but rather with:
>
> strong levels of competence in literacy and numeracy;
> analytical thinking and problem solving abilities;
> creative and expressive talents; and
> personal qualities of responsibility, initiative, creativity, adaptability, cooperativeness and self confidence
>
> (Finn, 1991: 115-6).

It is important for students to have the opportunities to 'discover' their own particular *range* of talents in a wide *variety* of settings. Interdisciplinary projects and integrated studies programs are useful in this regard, because they enable students to see the way in which the completion of work-tasks relies on an interdependence between a variety of skills and methods. Obviously too, their experience in part-time jobs, or their involvement in an effective work experience program offered by the school, can contribute to this, but they need to be encouraged to reflect on that experience to learn what it tells them about their own flexibility.

> All experiential opportunities should be encouraged throughout school and embraced by teachers as a way of enriching the curriculum. Students should be encouraged to evaluate their own work experiences and to think carefully about their role as active participants in the workplace (Finn, 1991: 158).

Teacher Pastoral Care and Flexibility. Constructive teacher/student relationships are crucial in young people's development of self-confidence and a desire to pursue further education. The research evidence demonstrates that one of the major factors in discontinuing education and in alienation from schooling is a lack of pastoral care and flexibility on the part of teachers (Fensham, 1986; Meade, 1981; YRC, 1990). As the pressure increases for students to stay on at school longer and develop their personal abilities further, the school's approach to issues of discipline and counselling will assume greater significance. Furthermore, policies with regard to post-school pathways and career options will place increasing pressure on schools to develop a more flexible range of in-school options.

> Submissions received by the Committee revealed a high degree of commonality in views on the broad role of schools in the context of increasing retention rates. This common view is that, in general:
>
> schools must retain their traditional role of providing an education for all   young   people which develops their talents and capacities to full potential;
> given increasing retention, Years 11 and 12 must be made a meaningful and   relevant experience for a broader, more heterogeneous student population,   amongst whom there is a proportion who are disenchanted with formal education; and
> this reinforces the need for quality education which integrates both general and vocational elements in Years 11 and 12 (Finn, 1991: 115).

These varying pressures make the growth of a positive and supportive 'school culture' a key element in the promotion of effective pathways into adult life for those still at school. This is not mainly an issue of successful levels of achievement at a subject-level, but rather of the types of social relationships and 'sense of belonging' manifested within the school.

> There is also evidence that positive attitudes towards school are associated with continuing at school and that favourable views of school life are not necessarily dependent on high achievement. A general satisfaction with school and a sense among young people that school work is relevant to their future are important influences on the decision to stay at school. Therefore programs aimed at raising achievement but which have the unintended consequence of reducing students' satisfaction might prove counterproductive.

> ....A number of submissions to this review made the point that school culture and, in particular, teacher attitudes have a significant influence on the willingness of disadvantaged young people to remain at school....

> Interpersonal support and the expectations of 'significant others' play a crucial role in shaping educational participation (Finn, 1991: 135).

Transition Networking. One of the difficulties with the concept of 'pathways' is that often on leaving school young people can find themselves in 'uncharted territory'. The 'crossover' from one type of educational institution (school) to another (TAFE or a university), or from the world of school to the world of work, is not as smooth or clearly-defined as the pathways image tends to suggest.

> The concept of pathways implies movement through a coherent set of educational and employment experiences leading to some identified destination, which may also be a link into a subsequent pathway. In a fully consistent system it should be possible to describe each pathway,

how and when it links with other pathways, and to identify the destinations which can be reached before a young person starts out on the pathway (Finn, 1991: 94).

Currently this is not the case. Even when a school has an effective careers guidance program, what happens to young adults once they have left that school can face them with a confusing pattern of choices (or lack of choice) and no identifiable institutional support. If they wish to resume their education often their 're-entry paths' are not at all clear or are not suited to the level of maturity they have achieved in the meantime.

> Our education and training pathways will not be complete unless there are adequate ways for such young people to recover and resume their educational progress.

> One point which came through very strongly from the consultations with young people is the importance of providing a second-chance opportunity to resume schooling for those who left early.... For some of these young people, the traditional school setting does not provide a suitable educational environment (Finn, 1991: 93).

At present in Australia, provision for the post-school needs of young people are haphazard. There is a clear contrast here with the practice in Sweden since 1977 in which local school boards (associated with municipal authorities) were responsible for the basic introduction to working life. In fact, since 1980 they have become fully accountable for monitoring and providing appropriate programs until the age of 18 years for those young people who did not continue with their education (Dwyer and Wilson, 1991).

The Finn Report has addressed this issue and raises the possibility of adopting an approach that has some similarities with the Swedish practice, through the establishment of Transition Coordinator positions in schools where retention rates are low. There are grounds for suggesting that such an initiative could be beneficial even in schools with higher retention rates.

> Coordinators would be directly responsible for monitoring the immediate post-school experiences of students leaving school. They would also be responsible for developing 'transition plans' through which a realistic career path is negotiated with the student and outcomes are followed up in the immediate post-school phase (Finn, 1991: 147).

It can be doubted whether the appointment of coordinators is sufficient of itself to provide the necessary structural support. *Networks* of support need to be clearly identified - and it is likely that the foundations of such networks already exist in many school settings, through past student associations, parent/teacher organisations and class reunion programs of various kinds.

Local Applications

If diversity and flexibility are essential elements of innovative pathways programs, this Project could not be expected to propose some overall or 'common' program for the participating schools. The five indicators chosen for the purposes of the Project represent the *dimensions* of effective practice, but how they apply in any one school is largely determined by local circumstances - the student intake and background, available staff, local employment opportunities, or the existing school culture. The next section of this Report gives the findings from a series of visits to each of the five schools in the Project.

Section 4. The Five Schools

Five schools participated in the project. Two members of YRC staff spent from three to five days in each of the schools, observing classes and other activities, meeting with students, teachers and parents, and consulting with the school Executive on issues of concern. An interim report was prepared for each of the schools and checked with them for purposes of accuracy. The reports produced the following picture.

School A. *New South Wales Country Region*

This is a co-educational secondary school with 772 students, including 263 boarders. Nearly 40 percent of the students' families receive their main income from farming. The school has a blend of general and vocational offerings to cater for a clear range of abilities and interests in their student intake. The curriculum is well-organised around these offerings and an effective process of subject planning and review is carried out through the positions of Department Heads.

One of the distinctive features of the school is its supportive 'school culture' - relationships amongst the students, amongst the staff, and between staff and students display a noticeable degree of co-operation and openness. In particular, the role of the Year Level Coordinators has a strong 'pastoral care' dimension to it which is impressive, and in the classes that were observed the students seemed to work together well. It was not clear to what extent the element of cooperation was more of an informal or unstructured dimension of the school culture, or whether cooperative practices were in fact an integral element of curriculum design.

Curriculum planning and classroom organisation did appear to be mainly teacher-centred, and once students had made their initial choices from amongst the subject offerings, the actual content and assessment seemed predetermined and prescribed rather than a matter for negotiation and diversity of options.

There was some concern amongst the staff and parents about how to motivate students, who often failed to make the connection between 'performing well' and 'working hard'. Attention was drawn to the fact that they are reluctant to apply for scholarships and similar opportunities, and even to some degree tend to undervalue themselves. This somewhat passive and vague outlook of the students suggests that their motivational levels could be improved if increased commitment to student co-responsibility was pursued. The YRC staff suggested that a first step might be to establish a joint staff/student 'working party' to explore this issue.

Pastoral care is a real strength of the school. It is particularly impressive in terms of its organisation on a year-level basis, with good collaboration between the student counsellors and the Year Level Coordinators. The school has obviously effective on-going links with its exit students, particularly with those who have continued through to the end of Year 12. In preparation for the visit of YRC staff, the school was able to provide a detailed list of what each of the 1991 HSC class was doing in 1992. Information about early school leavers - for example, Year 10 exit students - was not so readily available.

Finally, there does seem to be scope for a more co-ordinated and detailed program of work education. At present, it seems that students view the one-week work experience placement in Year 10 as a 'job-sampling' exercise, rather than an introduction to and reflection on the world of work and its organisation and demands. Also, while the students have access to an 'interests' or aptitude test with regard to career choices, the use of this instrument could perhaps be incorporated more formally into a work education program. The YRC staff proposed a curriculum outline on this issue for consideration by the school (see Appendix 1), and also considered that this was one area of the curriculum that provides an opportunity for student co-responsibility with regard to planning and implementation.

School B. *Victorian Regional Centre*

This College is the result of an amalgamation of three separate Colleges which had previously operated independently. The amalgamated school is a fully co-educational school, with a Years 7 - 9 campus and

a Years 10 -12 campus. The Pathways Project concentrated on the senior campus, and references in this report are restricted to that campus and its operations.

Despite the disruptions associated with amalgamation, and the pressures resulting from the introduction of the new VCE, levels of performance within the school were high. The obvious dedication of a hard-working and competent staff is seen as one of the major strengths of the school, and was commented on frequently in interviews with students, staff, parents and the senior administration. The school is organised very clearly around curriculum demands, with buildings and equipment being updated to broaden the range of choices in such areas as computer education, home economics and the visual arts. The school was also about to begin on an expansion of its library facilities. Year 10 students expressed a feeling that a concentration on the needs of Years 11 and 12 students limited their own opportunities in some areas, such as the development of computer and keyboard skills.

The school makes effective use of information nights to keep parents informed and to assist students with curriculum and career choices. A communications policy has been set in place to advise parents of a student's progress, with letters of commendation also being used to recognise real merit by any of them in some aspect of the school's activities.

While the school has a strong curriculum focus, other activities were cited as evidence of other benefits from its programs. Both sport and music were mentioned in this regard. Many students, for example, participate in one or other of the three school bands, which have an established reputation within the wider community.

Students in Year 10 were very positive about their job placements for work experience, particularly appreciating the scope given them by employers to move beyond menial chores and undertake responsibilities. The feedback from the local community about the students' reliability during work experience was good. At the same time, the students reported some unevenness in the outcomes of their job placements and would have appreciated some more systematic follow-up afterwards.

The discussions with staff and students led to the conclusion that the level of staff morale did not measure up to the high level of performance and dedication that was acknowledged by all. At the same time, while students were quick to recognise how hard-working the staff are, they expressed disappointment at the lack of opportunity to 'get to know them as people'.

These shortcomings were related to the unsettling effects of school amalgamations as well as recent changes in the pastoral care policy of the school. In the past the home room was defined as 'the most important pastoral and administrative unit in the College' but in 1992 home room time had been reduced. Further steps need to be taken, therefore, to bridge the gap between levels of performance and levels of staff and student morale. The YRC staff suggested the establishment of a school council with some staff and student representation, and also a working party made up of Year Level Coordinators and representatives of the SRC to examine key pastoral needs, explore possible initiatives, and propose a coordinated program for the future.

School C. Melbourne Metropolitan

This was a Year 7 - 12 boys school which was also the result of an amalgamation of a number of other schools. It currently has a total enrolment of about 760 pupils, of whom over 100 are completing Year 12. The College has a system of Year Level Coordinators accountable to the Deputy Principal, and a parallel system of Heads of Faculty under the leadership of the Curriculum Coordinator. The Principal, the Deputy and the Curriculum Coordinator form the Senior Executive of the School. The professed organisation style of the school is one of 'co-operative management'.

The school is in a mainly working-class suburb of Melbourne and is eligible for supporting grants under the Disadvantaged Schools Program. Its students are from predominantly non-Anglo backgrounds, mainly Italian with a proportion also of Lebanese and South East Asian. The family culture of the students has given the school a distinctive character.

The school has an effective induction program at the Year 7 level. Liaison is established with 'feeder' primary schools to determine levels of achievement and special needs of incoming students. There is a

Special Curriculum Needs Coordinator and Committee to provide programs and support in the areas of special education, English as a second language, and areas of disadvantage.

Year 10 is viewed as a transition year prior to the VCE, and the programs at this level are organised accordingly. There is a work education program, with introductory aptitude and careers testing and information, a semester long Living Skills program, a job placement process involving student negotiation leading to two weeks of work experience in late August. Subsequently, there is a student interview and guidance process to determine subject choices at the Year 11 level.

There is an advanced curriculum design. At the Year 7 -10 levels, the school has a policy of 'non-competitive work based assessment' and a system of 'objective report writing'. At the Year 11 - 12 levels, the VCE is well established and is linked in with a Forward Planning Committee to manage the students' subject selection process.

Students have a Students' Representative Council and also elect Year Level Student Committees, and the school has managed to build up a comparatively young staff which has a good gender balance and which is also culturally reflective of the area. The staff seem to be largely supportive in their dealings with students and morale appears high.

The overall impression is that the school has in place a range of curriculum and decision making structures and practices that are well suited to meeting the goals of the Pathways Project.

Given the suitability of the established structures, this Report was more concerned with the effectiveness with which the stated programs of the school are delivered. A number of questions arose concerning this issue.

While the 'student culture' is very positive and the students have a 'down-to-earth' and unpretentious outlook on life, it also appears to have an 'easy-going' cast to it. This might place some limitations on the capacity of the school to challenge the students to face up to the implications of the changes that are now beginning to affect their future options and pathways into adulthood. The confidence they draw from their family culture and the ways in which this is supported by the school could give rise to unreal expectations about the ease of achieving 'a better life' than their parents have had.

Thus, for example, Year 10 students seemed quite realistic about the types of subjects that were necessary to pursue particular types of careers but much less realistic about their chances of achieving entry into those careers for themselves. It would be informative to know what the actual outcomes of the 1991 Year 12 exit students proved to be - and for the current students to know (and investigate) such outcomes for those leaving at Years 11 to 12.

There was also some uncertainty about pastoral care policy. Students seemed unclear about what had replaced the 'home room' system that had operated prior to 1992. Some students claimed they now had designated pastoral 'contact teachers' whom they did not really know, and felt that there was some unevenness in 'delivery' of support at this level. Similar comments were made about curriculum options being affected by differences in teaching modes, with some teachers discouraging discussion and questions, and offering little individual assistance with class work.

School D.   Adelaide Suburban

This school was only established nine years ago in a new outer-suburban development in Adelaide. Its student population is drawn from families of mainly non-professional backgrounds in trades and service occupations and small farming. By comparison with the other schools there was a higher proportion of students who were no longer with both their original parents.

Being a newly developed school, it has the obvious advantage of matching its building design to contemporary curriculum needs. It has a co-educational enrolment of about 740, with 120 in Year 12. The original concept of the school aimed at fostering a sense of community, and as the enrolment numbers have grown that concept has been tied to the development of a House System with vertical groupings of about 150 students each. The House System is central to the pastoral care functions of the

school. Results at the Year 12 level are above the State average, and the development of the school since its inception has been aimed at providing a comprehensive curriculum with a good mix of general and vocational choices.

Meetings with staff, students and parents revealed a clear sense of pride and satisfaction with the school. There appeared to be a shared 'ethos' or sense of common purpose developed by the staff which was effectively communicated to the students, and the House System gave students a sense of belonging, and ample provision was made for special needs of particular students, through the Learning Assistance Program (which also incorporated some cross-age tutoring) and also a vertical curriculum system.

While there is ample evidence that the school is fulfilling its stated goals, the issues that were of particular interest to this Report were those that have a direct connection with the students' pathways into adulthood.

Thus, in terms of the preparation of students for *future career paths* the evidence was not clear-cut. All students in Year 10 and Year 11 are enrolled in Community Life Studies which are specifically designed to deal with 'real life' situations and develop the students' sense of responsibility. In Year 10, there is a counselling process, taking student interests and abilities into account, for the selection of subjects for the following year. This could be strengthened with the addition of some more detailed aptitude testing and some opportunity for work experience. The work experience program operates at the Year 11 level, but it appears to be more of a 'job sampling' activity, which occurs in the last week of a term, thus limiting the possibilities for effective follow-up.

Furthermore, while the community ethos of the school provides opportunities for active participation by students in contributing to various aspects of school life, it may not be having an impact on all students. The House System incorporates a process of election of student house captains, who play a leadership role in organising various student activities and attend meetings of the School Council. This provides them with scope for developing decision-making and communication skills, but the extent to which similar opportunities are developed for other students is questionable, apart from an occasional chance to address school assemblies.

During the YRC visit to the school, therefore, there appeared to be a gap between the obvious self-assurance of the students who were the house captains, and other students who were much more uncertain about their own opportunities and prospects. Given their satisfaction with school, this could have something to do with levels of self-motivation and commitment. Some examination of the theme of 'student co-responsibility' would be worthwhile, as would some investigation of opportunities for developing a 'negotiated curriculum' at the Year 10 level.

School E. Victorian Town

This is a school with a long-established tradition as a major boys boarding school. In the past ten years the number of male and female day students at the school has increased significantly and they now outnumber boarders.

Positive aspects of the school were immediately evident to the YRC staff during their on-site visit. The 1992 Year 10 students (who had participated in the survey as members of the 1991 Year 9 cohort) came across as a confident and articulate group who displayed obvious qualities of maturity and friendliness - an impression that was reinforced by the opinions of the Year 10 teaching staff. The students spoke favourably about a process of change at work in the school over the past five years - which was also remarked on in a meeting with Year 12 students. Both Year Levels, however, identified issues that they considered important.

Overall, the students were positive about the school, and while they pointed to some unevenness in the quality of teaching, they described their teachers as friendly, approachable and interested in their welfare. In particular, the students appreciated the element of choice and range of subjects in the Years 7 - 10 curriculum, although some of the Year 10 boys expressed a desire for some more 'trade-related' subjects. Other offerings such as those in art and graphics as well as home economics appeared popular. There was some concern about more pressure and less scope for choice in the Years 11 and 12 VCE curriculum

- for example to meet the Maths/Science/Technology requirements of the VCE there was limited scope to do technology units.

Favourable comments were made about matters of school organisation, including the use of committees and Year Level teams to provide channels for communication and decision-making input. The school has modified its 'home-room' system of pastoral care, but the new model seems to be working well. All teachers are expected to accept pastoral responsibilities, with teams of home-room teachers at all Year Levels, and a period every three weeks devoted to home-room activities. Both the students and the staff gave positive feedback about the new system.

Negative elements became more evident in discussions about future career paths. The Year 10 students spoke favourably of their work experience program and had been given opportunities by their employers to display initiative, but expressed doubts about whether they could end up in the career of their choice. Most seemed to assume that 'getting into a university' was the next step after Year 12 and had little knowledge of alternative pathways such as TAFE. The Year 12 girls in particular felt the need for more systematic or structured advice about alternative career paths.

There was other evidence too of the girls' uncertainty about their position and prospects. In the 1991 Survey, the girls were more worried than the boys about their job prospects (71 percent versus 63 percent) and less likely to feel 'very hopeful' about the future (21 percent versus 40 percent). Also, a need for 'more counselling services at school' was identified by a higher proportion of girls here (29 percent) than by boys (9 percent) or by the total of students in all the schools (16 percent). These contrasts and the fact that for the 1991 graduates the girls' outcomes are much 'narrower' than those of the boys seem to confirm that more attention needs to be devoted to developing their potential and broadening their options.

Finally, student perceptions of their future options indicated a degree of 'linear thinking' about appropriate career outcomes. There was an over-emphasis on the university 'pathway' which could not be justified in terms of the actual outcomes of the school's graduates from former years. There is a need to examine the implications of the gap between the *actual* outcomes of exit students and the 'expected' outcomes of current students and the 'desired' outcomes favoured within the school community.

Conclusion

The original brief for this consultancy by the Youth Research Centre was to examine the impact on the participating schools of the 'conflicting pressures of increased retention rates and the collapse of the youth employment market'. It was aimed at developing 'an implementation model' for other schools 'seeking to address the impact of the economic climate on school-leavers'. To achieve this aim the YRC team was asked to 'focus on positive aspects of the school, while identifying the areas of difficulty and dysfunction that need attention'. Any negative comments made in the course of this Section of the Report need to be set in this context. The purpose of 'identifying the areas of difficulty' is not to cast the schools in a bad light but to find ways of improving the capacity of each school to respond to the changing needs of its own students.

In summary, it is clear that the 'new agenda' of educational and economic policy presents a challenge to the current practices of schools that on previous criteria are obviously successful, well-organised 'good schools'. This is the case with all of these schools. The students themselves are obviously positive about the schools in terms of those previous criteria, but they are also aware of, but anxious about, that 'new agenda'. The issues raised in this Report reflect their concern.

Section 5. Reflections on Pathways Issues

There is a danger at present that retention to Year 12 may be interpreted predominantly in relation to the 'university degree pathway'. In the past this may have made some sense, in that the minority who did continue through to Year 12 mainly did so with university entry in mind. Now that staying on at school is the experience of the majority, this assumption that Year 12 is to be defined in terms of university entrance is no longer valid. School completion now needs to be linked quite clearly to a *diversity of pathways*. To achieve this, the curriculum design adopted within schools needs to provide for a sufficient range of options so that *other* 'post-school' courses and programs come to be seen as both attainable and desirable outcomes of a complete secondary education.

Actual Outcomes.

All of the schools taking part in this Project have the capacity, within the limits of the resources available to them, to design their curricula with this in view. An emphasis on broad curriculum design is important if the opening up of better and clearer 'pathways' into adult life from within schools is to be achieved. At the same time, it is equally important to improve students' access to a number of alternative pathways by promoting links with the non-university sector.

Following on the Finn Report, there have been other studies (Deveson, 1992; Carmichael, 1992) which have advocated closer links between schools and other pathways such as the TAFE area. The YRC staff have raised this matter in the course of the on-site visit to one of the five schools, but it is obviously a matter for general consideration within the pathways framework.

There are two major issues of concern here. First, there is the need to challenge the assumed link between post-compulsory schooling and the university pathway.   Secondly, there is the question of the ways in which collaborative arrangements could be developed with other institutions such as local TAFE colleges for 'joint enrolment' of students or for 'feeder institution' status.

Regarding this it is interesting to note that in a mini-survey of Year 10 students at one school only five of them identified career-options that were *not* university-based. A similar result emerged with the Year 10 students at two other schools. While these results are not in themselves surprising, they do demonstrate the extent to which 'going to the university' is perceived by students as the logical outcome of staying on at school beyond the compulsory years. There is an air of unreality to this.

What feedback we have from graduates of the five schools participating in this Project suggests that the expectations of many about gaining a university place - let alone one in an area of their own first choice - have not been fulfilled and some feel disillusioned as a result. The air of unreality needs to be dispelled. The outcomes for the 1991 Year 12 graduates in two of the schools indicated that more students are now following the TAFE pathway than they and their schools have perhaps expected.

A further issue that is worth raising here concerns the extent to which schools are addressing the career options of their female students. A survey at one of the schools indicated that the girls' choices were very much limited to more 'traditional' outcomes, such as nursing, teaching or working in service positions in retail or small business, while the boys had access to apprenticeships and a set of career options ranging from golf course management, cartography, or business computing through to psychology, science and engineering. The contrasts were significant.

	Male %	Female %
Nursing/Teaching	0	24
Service Industry	8	21
University-ARTS	6	10
Apprentice/Trade	20	0
Uni - Science etc	15	10
Other Tert/TAFE	32	16

Traditionally within Australia, girls have been discouraged from considering occupations that have been assumed to be 'more suited' to males, and have been directed into a narrow range of career choices. The changes that have taken place in community attitudes, workforce participation and anti-discrimination legislation mean that these traditional assumptions are no longer appropriate with regard to educational and career outcomes for female students. Available evidence from other research studies, however, suggests that such assumptions are still operative in many schools (AEC, 1992). This is, therefore, an issue that should be considered within the framework of the Pathways Project.

Student Participation.

One of the common features of the schools in this Project was the extent to which the staff accepted high levels of responsibility towards, and *on behalf of*, their students. This ethos raises questions about a possible *disjuncture* between the culture of the schools and the operative culture of what their students perceive as 'the real world'. That is, there is a sense in which the good and impressive aspects of these schools highlight the real changes and challenges facing an on-coming generation entering into a world that is very different from the one their parents and teachers have known. The elements of stability and predictability that the school ethos reflects are not readily identifiable in the 'real world' the students sense they face.

In addition, the curriculum reforms that have taken place at the post-compulsory level, coupled with the increasing pressures from government and employing organisations with regard to work competencies, signal the need to develop programs within schools that quite deliberately promote both the initiative or decision-making abilities of students and also their capacity and confidence to accept responsibility within co-operative work arrangements. This is demonstrated by the kinds of personal attributes that the major business organisations advocated to the Finn inquiry (Finn, 1991: 116).

It is important to emphasise here that the notion of 'flexible competencies' discussed in the third section of this Report is central to this issue. A deliberate effort needs to be made to encourage students to discover the diversity of talents or 'mixed abilities' they have which open up for them a range of options and flexible choices. The emphasis is on the emergence of flexible and competent adults who have confidence in their adaptability and skills. An illustration of how this type of 'work skills' approach can be integrated into the curriculum is given in Appendix 2, with specific reference to Year 10 students in the visual arts.

Each school needs to examine ways in which its delivery of the curriculum, its pastoral care policies and its work education program actually involve students in an *experience* of decision-making and promotes their sense of co-responsibility within the school. Unless schools maximise the students' opportunities to learn how to develop such capacities they will effectively be selling them short.

Implications

As a result of the examination of the programs operating at the five schools, this section of the Report has identified the issues discussed above as particularly relevant to the aims of the Pathways Project. Given the distinctive features of each school, and the resources available to it, the ways in which the issues will be approached will vary from school to school. Nevertheless, to fulfil the aims of the Project, each school was asked to propose a concrete plan of action, or implementation statement, to be put into effect for the coming year.

Section 6. Implementation Statement

As a result of the on-site visits to each of the five schools, a combined roundtable conference was held with representatives of the schools to prepare for the final implementation stage of the Project. Specific issues were identified for each of the schools and these were classified with reference to two of the major pathways issues: diversity of pathways, and co-responsibility.

Individual School Programs

Each school has provided a summary report of its planned initiatives for 1993. The details are as follows.

New South Wales Country Region. Shortly after the YRC visit in May, the school began upon implementation of the proposals provided in the draft report. There were four initiatives in particular that were suggested.

To deal with the issue of student co-responsibility a proposal was made that it would be good to investigate ways in which the students' sense of responsibility could be developed through participation in some of the school's decision-making and monitoring of policy. The school has established a series of meetings between the Year Level Coordinators and the Student Representative Council. It intends to continue with these meetings to develop mutual sharing of ideas and concerns.

Another area in which there seemed to be room for development was the school's work education program. As has been indicated earlier, the YRC staff provided an outline of the type of program that could be considered so that students could derive greater benefit from a carefully planned work experience placement combined with systematic follow-up. The school reports

> This is a key focus. At present a reshaping of career education and its connection to the workforce is under consideration for 1993. This change should see the introduction of a new job description for the Careers Officer. The continuation of the DSP funded One Unit course 'Employment Awareness' in the senior class would also be useful.

> The restructuring of the overall curriculum into eight key learning areas by the NSW Board of Studies allows the opportunity to incorporate career education into all levels of the school. Career education could form part of Personal Development, particularly in years 7 - 10.

A third initiative that was undertaken after the YRC visit was a Year 10 journalism project for some students to contact and interview 'early school leavers' from last year's Year 10. This project is now in process and is to be repeated for 1993 after an evaluation of its effectiveness.

Finally the school intends to formalise its contacts with and recording of its exit students. This work is being defined as 'a specific duty for a staff member' - and might be written into the new Careers Officer job description.

The experience of the school in 'trialing' a number of initiatives during the current year should place it in a good position to carry out a systematic program in 1993 to meet the objectives of the Pathways Project.

Victorian Regional Centre. This school also has taken prompt action in response to the issues raised in Section 4 of this Report. The major initiative is in the area of pastoral care. Fourteen members of staff have been formed into a Pastoral Care Committee to carefully analyse and evaluate the present program with a view to implementing necessary changes for the 1993 school year. The committee has already submitted an initial report which includes the following considerations.

> Every contact between a staff member and a student, student and student, staff member and parent has the potential to be a pastoral contact.... We believe that there is scope to develop our existing approach to pastoral care but this should not be done at the expense of what already is happening. We have opened the question of pastoral care to teachers and students for they must have ownership of decisions made regarding pastoral care....

We feel that there will need to be clear support from the SRC, the overall student body and members of staff concerning any changes working towards further improvements of our present Pastoral Care Practice.

The committee is currently considering a modification of the school timetable to incorporate a pastoral care period into the school week, but insists that if this is done it should be seen as part of a broader structure.

A second initiative proposed by the school is in the area of work education. The school has established a committee of parents, students and teachers to examine the development of a more structured program. The committee is chaired by the current Work Experience facilitator.

In addition the school has responded to a number of other issues touched on in the YRC report. Thus, it has also been decided to establish a student counselling team, employed as non-teaching members of staff, amounting eventually to the equivalent of 1.2 full-time staff. Also, the matter of improved access, specifically at the Year 10 level, to computing and keyboard skills is being addressed, and in accordance with its overall five year plan the school hopes to provide further computer terminals for the commencement of the 1993 school year.

It has been decided not to follow up on the YRC staff suggestion about the establishment of a School Council. The intent of the other initiatives, however, largely fulfils the objectives of the Pathways Project. In particular, the work being undertaken by the Pastoral Care Committee should be of direct benefit to the students, and that combined with a more structured work education program should enable the school to respond to their 'pathways' needs. The promptness with which the school has responded should also contribute significantly to the further development of school morale.

Melbourne Metropolitan. One of the strengths identified here was the approach to Year 10 as a transition year prior to the VCE. Several years ago, the College began a Career Exploration Program linked with aptitude profiles, and at both Years 10 and 11 there is a fairly intensive counselling program to advise students about their subject and career choices to ensure that the choices made are realistic and consistent. In reviewing the findings of the Pathways Project the College has taken notice of the comments about levels of unreality in the expectations of current Year 10 students regarding their future career paths. To deal with this issue a decision has been made to give further class time to the Year 10 Living Skills unit to provide a better base for addressing student expectations.

> This will have the advantage of bringing in new units on transition, as well as integrating better the Work Experience program which is done at Year 10 level. Thus, in addition to what has been taught previously, such areas as the Career Exploration Program, units on VCE, and other work related to the student's future will be included.

One area which was identified by the YRC staff as a source of some confusion for students was that of pastoral care policy. The switch from the 'home room' approach to one of 'contact teachers' for each group of students appeared to have resulted in some unevenness of 'delivery'. The College has noted the comments of the YRC staff and has established a committee to develop a more consistent and effective pastoral care policy for 1993.

> Having moved away from the home room concept and structure, which for all practical purposes was a ten minute administration period, the College has introduced the contact teacher approach - one teacher for about 15 students. Thus, each core group (previously designated as a home room group) has two teachers assigned to it (each of these has at least one subject with the group). The idea is for these teachers to develop over the year a bond between these students. However, this did not work all that effectively - teachers have tended to concentrate on other things due to pressure of work. In order to do something about the situation the matter was discussed at length at a recent staff meeting. As a result of this a committee has been set up to assist in the development of a Pastoral Care Policy - a framework on which to base future approaches and structures. Early in 1993 we will look at ways in which this policy can be implemented.

Adelaide Suburban. The main areas of change that this school has concentrated on are: student co-responsibility; work education; and the development of a transition file.

On the first, the College has expressed a 'strong desire to increase the opportunities for student leadership in the school'. It is hoped that this will extend to all aspects of school life. Thus

> there is a feeling that the Student House and School 'Forums' need further attention and support and this will be looked at in 1993.
>
> Students also have been invited to take and have already taken a more active role in the running of whole school assemblies - organising, leading, presenting items.
>
> In the area of curriculum negotiation we would need to say that a number of students are already engaged in this through formal syllabuses where major pieces of work involve students in community based research and learning to develop independent studies and projects.
>
> Other students would experience opportunities for such negotiation and this would be directly related to the preferred teaching style of some of our teachers in particular curriculum areas. The introduction this year of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) will encourage this and lead in due course to a 'trickle back' effect on the junior school curriculum.

With regard to work education, such aspects as the timing of work experience and the mode of presentation of Careers Education have been revised for 1993. Changes include the selection of two teachers for each of the school Houses to visit the students while on work experience and participate in a debriefing session with the students on their return to school. The Executive of the College will meet in early December to examine Social Education policies - which include Career Education, and the purchase of the JAC and JILL career computer programs is being considered.

A start has been made on formalising information about past students. The Old Scholars Association has been asked to gather information on what former students are currently doing and this information is being collated on computer. The fortnightly school newsletter has been used to seek further information on former students and there has already been some response to this.

> We hope too to gather some data from a Youth Survey being conducted by a nun working in one of the local parishes on a profile of young people and their needs in the surrounding district.
>
> In addition we hope to have some of our students (probably at Year 12 level) to take up the suggestion of surveying former students to ascertain what they are doing and where they are.

The College has responded well to the findings of the on-site visit and intends to follow up even further on some of the issues raised.

Victorian Town. This was the last of the schools to be visited and has only had since late July to reflect on the input of the YRC staff. Yet, by mid-November the College had already made considerable progress in response to the 'pathways' themes. This progress has covered four different but interconnected areas: curriculum; professional development; student participation; and work education.

In the area of curriculum, a Year 10 Community Service program has already taken place, with all of the Year 10 student visiting the "House of Welcome" in Fitzroy as part of a 'reality experience for country students'. For 1993 students have already shown an increasing interest in enrolling in such subjects as Technological Design and Development, Systems Technology, and Small Business Management and the College has accommodated their choices. The staff are also working to guarantee the 'transferability' of student competencies in these studies (e.g. through the selection of appropriate Work Requirements).

In the area of professional development, staff of the College have participated in an increasing number of seminars and curriculum days devoted to the exploration of the major policy reports on the 'pathways' themes. In September and November the College Staff meetings heard presentations on the Deveson and Mayer reports; and College representatives are participating in local Shire consultations about the provision of post-secondary education in the region.

On the issue of student participation the College is exploring the development of an effective Student Representative Council.

> Our Student Welfare Coordinator has been reviewing the place and role of our 'student leaders' and looking at appropriate models of the SRC (which our 1993 Peer Support Program launch will feed into).

With regard to work education the role of the Careers Coordinator is being reviewed with a widening of the focus to the Year 10 area.

> Our Careers Coordinator is developing
>
> > industry links via ex-students, parents and friends of the College;
> >
> > an exit register of Years 10 - 12 students since 1991.
>
> Meanwhile we are awaiting an independent review of our Year 10 to 11 to 12 transition processes (part of a staff member's post-graduate studies) to be considered by the College Executive.

Critical Comments

There remains a series of unresolved issues related to this Project. Because the concept of 'pathways' has only recently been introduced into policy discussions, what it means in practice is in many ways yet to be determined. In this sense, the five schools which have participated in this Project have had imposed on them 'from outside' a new set of criteria for assessing the quality of their work. They have had to contend with the 'new agenda' of Australian post-compulsory education.

All of the schools involved in the Project have responded genuinely to the critique of their programs that is implicit in this. In general terms, each of them is a 'good school' with a well-organised curriculum, a dedicated staff and a serious commitment to preparing their students for what faces them in the future.

It remains true, however, that they do now face a 'new agenda'. For this reason, some final comments are called for concerning unresolved issues that have been identified by the YRC staff in the course of the process of consultation. The unresolved issues have a double-sided effect to them. They call into question the lack of attention given by policy-making bodies regarding the considerable pressures and demands to which school communities - students, their teachers and parents - are being subjected. They also challenge those communities to 'come to terms with' a process of change affecting career structures and workforce practices that in some ways are 'at odds with' the established school traditions. Inevitably, because the issues are in substance unresolved, they have a *critical* edge as well. There are three issues in particular that demand further attention.

The Pressures of Untested Policy. One of the unique features of the Pathways Project has been that it has been something of a pioneering venture in establishing a 'model' for post-compulsory schooling that can be developed further by other schools. Unfortunately, the schools have had to do this at a time when their staff and students are already under pressure from the expanding demands of the school curriculum as a result of changes instituted at a State level particularly for Years 11 and 12. The development of new or reorganised fields of studies, and the implementation of new forms of assessment and work requirements, have increased the levels of stress amongst staff as they adjust to the impact of increased retention rates in their schools.

Some resentment, uncertainty and even resistance about these new policy directions is already apparent among school staff, as well as among some State educational authorities, such as the NSW Catholic Education Commission which has expressed concern about the implications for small schools, particularly in rural communities, as well as the increased workload pressures on teachers (Catholic Education Commission, 1992: 3).

The Pathways Metaphor. Prior to the recent policy preoccupation with the 'pathways' theme, the Youth Research Centre had been making use of the concept of pathways as a means of analysing the development of youth policy both here and overseas (see for example YRC, 1989; Dwyer and Wilson, 1991). It defined the concept in terms of pathways *to adulthood* - what do youth need in order to establish an *independent adult identity for themselves*? - rather than in the much more restricted sense - how can they be prepared to fulfil the needs of a restructured economy? - in which it has mainly been used in recent policy documents. There is a problem with this restricted definition in that it can

degenerate into a somewhat impersonal metaphor which *pretends* that genuine pathways actually exist. Some of the schools involved in the current Project have drawn attention to the difficulties associated with the metaphor, and the YRC staff have also identified problems with it.

Thus, the imbalance between the growth of the university sector and arrangements within the TAFE area is a source of confusion and misunderstanding at a school level. As noted in the previous Section, one of the undesirable consequences of increased retention to Year 12 has been a degree of 'linear thinking' that concentrates almost exclusively on the university pathway as the only conceivable outcome to successful completion of Year 12. There is a serious mismatch between the *actual* outcomes and pathways of exit students and both the 'expected' outcomes of the current students and the 'desired' outcomes favoured within the school community by many parents and teachers. For numbers of exit students the supposed 'pathways' just do not exist.

This mismatch is made worse by inadequacies in the availability of programs within the TAFE sector. A school such as that in New South Wales has potential access to TAFE colleges in three local towns, but the planning of a TAFE pathway for exit students has to contend with a perception of TAFE as a 'low status' option, as well as with the possible cancellation of courses due to fluctuating enrolments and lack of suitable staff. In addition, proposals such as those contained in the Deveson Report concerning 'joint enrolments' or 'cross-crediting' need to address the increased costs that could be involved for students and their families in considering this option.

Currently for many exit students, the post-school scene is a wild and chaotic one, with a confusing pattern of choices (or lack of choice) and little discernible institutional support. A more appropriate metaphor at this stage would be 'uncharted territory' (Holden, 1992). Unless the realities of the 'crossover' from school into post-school settings are addressed, the potential of *structured pathways* into adulthood for young Australians will remain at the level of unreal metaphor and nothing more.

Established Traditions. There is a sense in which the five schools in this Project have been caught by surprise by some of the issues that have emerged as central to the Pathways theme. This is particularly true of the issue of *student participation and decision-making*. The YRC staff provided each of the schools with documentation of school practices and policy directions related to this issue, and gave details of practical examples of the effectiveness of student decision-making and how it could be achieved. Overall, the schools were not as responsive on this issue as we might have hoped.

The terminology itself is informative. The YRC staff found a degree of hesitancy about 'participation in decision-making' and they fell back on what seemed to be the more 'acceptable' term of co-responsibility. Even with co-responsibility there was still some confusion on two aspects: the participation of students in formal decision-making *structures* within the school; and the participation of students in a process of negotiation and shared responsibility regarding certain aspects of *curriculum* content and practice.

On the first, the existing practice in the schools can be contrasted, for example, with the standard practice in Victorian Government schools where student representation on school councils is *mandatory* (in fact, there is provision for students to comprise up to one third of the 'elected' core membership of a school council).

On the second aspect, 'participation' seemed to be equated with the friendly or co-operative atmosphere of the school as if the fact that staff and students 'got on well together' meant that they actually 'worked together'. In other contexts we would have raised the prospect of youth action projects (see Holdsworth, 1986: 30) or school-based student enterprises (Cumming, 1992:18 - 24, Holdsworth, 1992: 36), in which students organise their learning around a major project or even the production and marketing of commercial goods. It is informative to note that an increasing number of schools even in remote rural areas have undertaken significant action or enterprise projects. Cumming (1992), for example, gives details of at least 37 projects in 30 rural schools throughout Australia ranging from farm enterprises to environmental cooperatives and small business ventures. However, given the hesitancy we perceived in the Pathways Project schools about notions of student participation and decision-making, the YRC staff limited their concrete proposals to a number of student research projects they thought would not pose too big a challenge.

It would be true to say that there is now greater familiarity with the issue by members of the school executives and that some initial steps, particularly at two of the schools, have been taken already to consider it. It is nevertheless also true that discussions about co-responsibility at various stages of the Project led to concerns in some schools about 'authority' that raised doubts about whether students were 'mature' enough to exercise responsibility, or whether there would be some loss of control or lack of accountability. A similar kind of hesitancy was also evident in some instances with regard to gender concerns. This may have had something to do with the fact that the 'authority role models' in most of the schools were male, and it is possible that the uncertainty or hesitancy on both issues may partly reflect the protective culture of the schools associated with an established understanding of authority and control expressed through relatively 'tight' hierarchical organisational structures. Whatever the explanation, the issues are important ones that have very definite implications for the futures of both the female and male students of the participating schools.

Thus, on the gender issue, the Australian Education Council's recent study indicates how the 'pathways into adulthood' of female students are circumscribed.

> What girls said about their expected immediate post-school destinations cannot be captured in a few simple generalisations.... Some generalisations can be safely made, however. Few girls mention TAFE. Girls in rural schools were the most traditional in orientation. Academically oriented young girls will not enrol to be engineers, technologists, tradespeople, scientists, retail or industry workers, but there will be plenty of female lawyers and doctors. Most girls have only a hazy idea of the economics of adult life. Many girls believe that if they work for five years or so they will be 'set up' and able to leave the workforce and have children. (AEC, 1992: 31).

This evidence is confirmed by the 1991 report from the Evaluations and Investigations Program on *Improving Access of Disadvantaged Youth to Higher Education*, particularly with regard to women in non-traditional subject areas (Abbott-Chapman, 1991: 176 - 194). As was pointed out in Section 5 of this Report, the changes that have taken place in community attitudes, workforce participation and anti-discrimination legislation mean that these traditional assumptions are no longer appropriate with regard to educational and career outcomes for female students. As far as the Pathways Project is concerned, the successful preparation of female students for the future will depend on the emphasis the schools give to the girls' entitlement to their own dignity and to genuine pathways to independent adulthood.

On the issue of co-responsibility, it is important to insist that the policy pronouncements on the 'pathways' theme, along with the pressure from business leaders, is built on a genuine concern to improve the personal skills of future workers - what they now expect from schools is the emergence of flexible and competent adults who have confidence in their adaptability and skills. That ultimately is what the competency debate is all about. Already it is clear that the process of award restructuring within Australia is moving the workforce rapidly towards an emphasis on flexibility, teamwork, and employee participation. As the report on *Workplace Bargaining - The First 100 Agreements* states

> Most changes introduced in workplace agreements centre on changes to work organisation, with an emphasis on increased labour flexibility through elimination of demarcation barriers, team work, quality assurance, continuous improvement, employee participation and devolution of work (Commonwealth Department of Industrial Relations, 1992: 5).

There is room for further development of co-responsibility in each of the schools, and it would be good if this was given further attention in the course of 1993. Otherwise there is a risk here of a widening gap between the schools' established traditions and the 'real world' practices for which the students in the *Survey of Seventeen Schools* wanted their schools to prepare them.

Conclusion

The critical comments made in this final Section arise because of unresolved issues associated with the 'pathways' theme. Schools are being expected to respond to a process of unprecedented change within educational and economic policy and practice in Australia. Approaches that have proved successful in the past are being called into question, and new expectations are being imposed on schools with insufficient attention being given to whether schools have the resources and properly tested programs for fulfilling them.

Positive aspects of the five participating schools have been identified and used as a basis for change. There have been some areas of difficulty and dysfunction as well. Because they chose to become involved in the Pathways Project, the schools have exposed themselves to a new range of issues at their 'critical edge'. In doing so they have embarked on what amounts to a genuinely pioneering venture to establish a model of implementation for other schools that addresses what is a completely new agenda for all Australian schools.

Appendix 1.

R. Holdsworth: *A Suggested Work Education Program.*

Currently, many of the students involved in the work experience program regard it as a 'job-sampling' exercise. As one student put it :'it's a chance to look at a job I might want to do and see if I like it'. Given what we know about current work patterns and job opportunities in Australia, such a 'narrow' view of work experience is likely to be unproductive and prevent students from developing a better understanding of the personal abilities that they need to develop and the general demands of work.

If the students are to derive positive benefit from work experience beyond mere 'job-sampling', a program needs to be designed that provides them with more focused preparation and follow-up. Possible programs would look like this.

A. Year 10 Work Experience Program

2 'induction' sessions ----> work placement ----> 2 'de-briefing' sessions

Induction Session 1:

a. Why work experience?	Student 'buzz-groups' devise written list of aims and expectations, then pool results.
b. What work experience?	Students identify and group the different placement options.
c. What do we expect it to be like?	Students to discuss their individual expectations, and the things they think are common elements in all jobs.
d. What will we look for? themselves about the general aspects of	Teacher-led discussion of questions they should be asking 'work' and the specific aspects of a particular job placement.

Homework: students to prepare a list (with reasons why) of at least five questions about work that they hope to be able to answer as a result of their work placement.

Induction Session 2:

This session would be a review of the class responses to the issues raised in Session 1.

- collate student homework questions
- create a total list, reduce any overlap, and select a list of about 10 key questions
- form headings for questions: e.g.   - about my feelings
                                          - about the work itself
                                          - about other people involved
                                          - about problems
-   students prepare a list of common questions (what we all want to know) and particular questions (something extra that 'I' want to know).

Work placement:
- students to keep a daily diary to write up their feelings, thoughts, experiences

De-briefing Session 1:

- sharing of particular experiences
- describing the work activities/routine
- reflecting on differences between what they expected and 'the reality'
- individual writing on 'what it was like' and 'what I learnt'

De-briefing Session 2:

- pooling of information from diaries and individual writing
- are there any common themes or patterns?
- return to the questions from Induction Session 2 - what do we know now about work?

Homework: students use their diaries, their individual writing in the previous class, and the class discussion to write their own response to - what do we know now about work?

B. A Year 7 to Year 12 Program

 Another possibility might be to develop a much broader work education strategy beginning at the Year 7 level. It could be designed along the following lines.

1. Work Observation.

In Year 7, each student would undertake to spend at least one day (or two half-days) with a relative in their work place, observing what they do and answering a few limited questions such as

> what's the best thing about the job?
> what's the worst thing about it?
> what types of 'skills' does the work require?

This is to be completed by the end of Term 2. If possible, class discussion could be organised in Term 3 around these issues.

In Year 8, this process could be extended to the equivalent of two days in two different jobs. The emphasis would be on comparisons between the two jobs

> the differences in work organisation and required skills?
> the similarities between the two jobs?
> what do you need to learn at school for a career in either job?

In Year 9, this could be followed up with some class interviews of people

> someone who is self-employed
> someone who works for someone else
> someone who owns or manages a business

These interviews could be done in class groups, in small groups or individually. The interview questions would be developed by the students and the results would be written up by students.

2. Self-Identity.

It would be worth investigating a program of activities/discussions/questionnaire (for use at various year levels) about personal aptitudes and interests

> who am I?
> what am I interested in?
> what am I good at?
> what are my hobby and leisure skills?

Some of this material already exists, and some will be available through the new Key Study Area of Personal Development.

3. Work Knowledge.

In Years 9 -10 (and probably in Years 11 -12 as well) there could be specific investigative projects about particular jobs or career paths. For example, a small group could identify a particular career and be required to

> find out (through booklets etc) what the formal requirements   are   for

entry etc;

interview a person or persons working in that career about the 'pathway' into the career and the personal skills required.

This information could be stored in a 'careers bank' that other students would have access to. In fact, the classes could undertake a specific project to develop and maintain such a bank for the school, to supplement the formal information.

4. Course Experience.

In Years 11 and 12 students could carry out a direct investigation of career training/entry requirements. This could be done at least by writing to/phoning the proposed course office for information (how do I apply, what scores do I need, what are the prerequisites), but could also include interviews with former students about 'what is it really like?" - "how is it different from school?", or even sitting in on a class at a tertiary institution - "do I see myself sitting here in 12 months time?"

Much of this formal information may be already available, but the emphasis should be on students searching it out for themselves, rather than relying on others to do it for them.

Appendix 2.

Work Skills Units For Year 10 Students In The Visual Arts.

For the duration of the Pathways Project a group of third year Bachelor of Education students in the School of Visual Arts at the University of Melbourne has acted as a program reference group. For the final stage of the Project they undertook to work in teams with a view to designing some samples of possible single semester 'work skills units' for Year 10 school students in the visual arts.

The purpose of the exercise was to investigate ways in which the notion of 'flexible competencies' could be given concrete expression within a range of subjects in the school curriculum. This Appendix provides some details on the brief undertaken by the Bachelor of Education students, and the range of themes and specialist subject areas utilised.

A. Topic.

To design a collaborative 'work skills unit' for Year 10 students. *Small groups of the Year 10 would be given a group project to complete* in order to meet the following requirements.

B. Requirements.

1.   To demonstrate to the Year 10 students a staff team approach, with each staff member complementing the other in particular strengths or areas of specialisation.
2.   To give the Year 10 students the experience of undertaking a team-task which would involve planning, timing and completing a project of their own.
3.   To provide the students with the opportunity to combine a broad range of skills within a single project.
4.   To design a 'reflection' exercise to follow the completion of the project, which would enable the students to identify the 'work-skills' developed in the project.
5.   To illustrate a variety of career-options to which such work-skills would be particularly relevant.

C. Objective.

To identify ways in which 'pathways' themes can be addressed within the visual arts curriculum. Are there learning skills students can develop in this area that would enhance their *overall* career prospects? Are there particular strengths in this area which make it specially suited to the development of a *broad* range of work skills?

More specifically emphasis is placed on
       i. students' capacity to enter into joint projects;
      ii. the development of planning and decision-making skills;
      iii. the ability to draw on a range of skills;
      iv. reflection on the relevance of these skills to workplace practices.

D. Themes.

The following themes were chosen.

The Urban Environment - a display in a rural community. Subject areas: photography, graphics, drawing, sculpture.

Urban and Rural Environments - a school exhibition. Subject areas: painting, photography, ceramics, art appreciation, design.

The Environment - a school exhibition. Subject areas: general art, sculpture, photography, graphics.

The Environment - a public sculpture or mural. Subject areas: woodcraft, metalcraft, drawing.

'Where the Wild Things Are' - a group exhibition. Subject areas: ceramics, sculpture, design.

A Fashion Parade. Subject areas: textiles, metalcraft.

Dramatisation of an Art Theme. Subject areas: textiles, sculpture, photography, painting.

Youth Unemployment - a school exhibition and function organised around the theme. Subject areas: ceramics, general art, photography, and home economics.

Letter Box Production - a group exhibition. Subject areas: technical drawing, woodcraft, ceramics, painting, art history.

School Chapel Renovation. Subject areas: art history, textiles, ceramics, glasswork.

Advertising Printmaking. Subject areas: art history, design, graphics, screenprinting.

E. Design of the Unit.

The actual design of the work skills unit varied, depending on the particular theme chosen. In general, however, the following elements were proposed.

1. Explanation of the Unit, and Selection of a Theme.
2. Planning of Subject Classes/Studios, and Production Time-line for Display.
3. Outline of Student Work Tasks and Supporting Activities (e.g. excursions).
4. Design and Planning of Display or Exhibition, and Preparation of Exhibits.
5. Reflection or Review Exercise.
6. Discussion of Career Issues.

One of the themes, the Fashion Parade developed by Anna Cavaleri and Lindy Mathers, is given here in summary form to illustrate the process.

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F. Fashion Parade Work Skills Unit.

1.   In designing this collaborative 'work skills unit' the focus is to parallel the working sequence in a work place. In this unit for Year 10 students the pupils are required to complete individual projects combining textile and metalcraft skills. Upon completion of these they are assembled together to form the components of a team effort. Studio areas that are combined for this project are essentially Metal and Textiles. These areas require highly specialised studios; therefore the actual practical work is kept separate.

The objective is to work towards a combined exhibit (in the form of a fashion parade) that features the work of students. They need to produce these items within the boundaries of a group theme. The theme should be formulated by the class with the final choice being made by group consensus.

2. The planning for the subject areas and studio sessions is as follows.

Textiles.	Metalcraft.
Basic Pattern Drafting	Basic Techniques
Painting	Colouring
Printing	Forming
Stitchery	Precious Metals/Non Ferrous Metals
	Casting

3. A selection of mini-assignments for the students is provided over the course of the semester to complement their studio work.

A report on *a particular artist* in the metalwork/textile areas whose work has been exhibited. A brief history of the artist and the exhibitions/ performances they have been involved in, and some personal 'critique' of the artist's work.

A discussion of *a particular process* used (either traditional or innovative) in metalwork/textiles. How is the process used and what can be achieved by it?

An interview with *a manufacturer* - what they produce and how, and how they set up the business: has it grown, how many workers are employed there, the market etc.

A commentary on a particular process originating in *non-western culture* - its importance in the culture and whether it is done independently or communally.

A discussion of the *historical origin* of a particular craft - where did it originate and how; is it still practiced today and by whom?

A report on *a contemporary exhibition*.

In addition, the students would be expected to keep a resource journal during the unit.

4. Preparing the Fashion Parade. The Parade employs the knowledge and expertise of a greater number of staff members: the school's Drama department, for example, and the Graphics/Design department. Alongside the textile and metalwork students, other students can be encouraged to get involved and form a production committee to plan such elements as: audio visual; lighting and effects; choreography; props/backdrops; artwork for posters/tickets; photography; backstage assistance etc.

Such an activity/production sees the marriage of a very broad range of work skills in achieving a specific goal.

5. Upon completion of individual projects class time will be allocated to the presentation of these works prior to the Parade. The presentations are to be brief and provide an opportunity to see and discuss

the variety of works created
function of various work skills
identification of these
elements of design
personal responses
group input and output (feedback).

This is a *reflection exercise* to provide an opportunity to discuss any problems they have had with the unit and the 'work based skills' concept. It also enables any problems in organising the Parade to be ironed out. Some discussion questions might be

have they developed sufficient work skills throughout the project
would this be a way they would like to continue to work
do they see this as the way people in the workforce actually work?

6. Up until this stage career options have only been briefly touched upon. They have been intentionally left to late in this program so that students could actually experience and be exposed to a *variety* of work skills. The unit would conclude with a careers options session.

The class would discuss the kinds of skills that have been taught/learnt and the professions in which they are practiced; other skills involved in the successful completion of the Parade, or which could have

improved it.   There could be some follow-up to this: a guest speaker on career options; a visit by a practising artist or designer; an excursion to a careers reference centre; a visit to a studio of practising artists.

G. Broadening the Options.

The example 'work skills unit' given above has been selected because it concentrates on two quite specialised areas. In other examples, the scope for students to work together in teams throughout the whole of the semester was greater, and some of the skills developed were less specialised (for example, in some of the Environment projects).

However specialised the areas may be, it is important to use the unit to broaden the students' understanding of what is required in various workplaces and the way skills developed in one subject area are in fact 'portable' into a broad range of settings; that is, not limited to the particular career path associated with that subject area.

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