LEADERS CLOSING THE GAP IN YOUTH ATTAINMENT AND TRANSITIONS

BOBBY HARREVELD & MICHAEL SINGH

The journey so far in senior secondary schooling

with
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Contents

List of figures ........................................................................................................................................... i
List of tables ............................................................................................................................................... i
Acronyms and initialisms ....................................................................................................................... ii

Executive summary ................................................................................................................................. 1
  Background ........................................................................................................................................... 1
  Project aim ........................................................................................................................................... 2
  Key findings ......................................................................................................................................... 3

Chapter 1—Introduction ........................................................................................................................ 6
  1.1 Historically significant policy settings ......................................................................................... 6
  1.1.1 Education and training leadership in Queensland ................................................................. 9
  1.2 Project overview ......................................................................................................................... 11
    1.2.1 Significance ............................................................................................................................ 12
    1.2.2 Queensland’s response ........................................................................................................... 14
    1.2.3 The Problem .......................................................................................................................... 16
  1.3 Project outcomes ......................................................................................................................... 17
    1.3.1 Advancing knowledge ........................................................................................................... 17
    1.3.2 Conceptual contributions ....................................................................................................... 18
  1.4 Structure of this Report ............................................................................................................... 18

Chapter 2—Leading innovations ........................................................................................................... 20
  2.1 Reconceptualising senior secondary schooling through vocational learning ....................... 20
    2.1.1 Australian policies on learning .............................................................................................. 22
    2.1.2 Vocationalising learning ...................................................................................................... 24
  2.2 Leadership for learning ............................................................................................................... 25
    2.2.1 Leaders and leadership ......................................................................................................... 25
    2.2.2 Leading capacity building ................................................................................................... 28
  2.3 Leadership for youth attainments and transitions .................................................................... 29
    2.3.1 Multiple pathways and diverse learning experiences ............................................................. 30
    2.3.2 Participation, attainment and transition outcomes ................................................................. 31
  Summary .............................................................................................................................................. 33

Chapter 3—Research approach ............................................................................................................. 35
  3.1 A theoretical note ......................................................................................................................... 35
  3.2 Developing the case ..................................................................................................................... 36
  3.3 Data collection .............................................................................................................................. 37
    3.3.1 Interviews: sampling of sites and selection of key informants ............................................. 38
    3.3.2 Generating a questionnaire from the interviews ................................................................. 39
  3.4 Data management and analysis .................................................................................................. 40
    3.4.1 Research education and training ......................................................................................... 42
  Summary ............................................................................................................................................. 42
Chapter 4—Leaders changing school culture: curriculum renewal and cultural change

4.1 Capabilities of leaders ................................................................. 44
  4.1.1 Making information publicly available ........................................ 45
4.2 Differentiating curriculum, time, spaces and places ............................. 46
  4.2.1 Curriculum ........................................................................... 46
  4.2.2 Time ..................................................................................... 48
  4.2.3 Spaces and places ................................................................. 49
4.3 Changing mindsets ........................................................................... 50
4.4 Challenges to curriculum renewal ....................................................... 55
Summary ......................................................................................... 58

Chapter 5—Leaders building capacity: people, partnerships and pathways .......... 60
5.1 Leading people ............................................................................... 60
  5.1.1 Leaders as transition brokers ..................................................... 62
5.2 Leading partnerships ....................................................................... 63
  5.2.1 Multifaceted school-industry partnerships ..................................... 64
  5.2.2 Students/school partnerships: alternative schooling options ........ 68
5.3 Partnerships leading VET from the margins to the mainstream ................ 73
5.4 Partnerships for academic and vocational pathways ............................. 78
Summary ......................................................................................... 81

Chapter 6—Leaders closing the gap: challenges in youth attainment and transition.... 82
6.1 Characteristics of leadership ............................................................. 82
6.2 Judging leadership success ............................................................... 83
6.3 Leadership of senior secondary schooling for all ................................ 86
6.4 Implications for future leadership .................................................... 89
6.5 Leadership for capabilities .............................................................. 91
Summary ......................................................................................... 93

Chapter 7—Conclusion .......................................................................... 94
7.1 Capabilities for pathways and partnerships ........................................... 94
7.2 Implications .................................................................................. 96
7.3 Leadership frontiers ....................................................................... 96
Summary ......................................................................................... 98

References ....................................................................................... 99

Appendix 1: Historically significant policies and influences on education and training107
List of figures

Figure 1: Essential leadership capabilities ................................................................. 10
Figure 2: Leadership for cross-sectoral, multi-level, socio-economically aligned learning .......... 94

List of tables

Table 1: Leadership capabilities contents ........................................................................ 10
Table 2: Qld strategies for NP YAT: attainment, transition, planning and partnerships .......... 15
Table 3: Research questions, focus and codes .................................................................. 41
Table 4: Objectives of senior secondary schooling in Queensland ..................................... 43
Table 5: Capabilities Framework for an Australian Curriculum ....................................... 92
Table 6: Historically significant policies and influences on education and training ............... 107
# Acronyms and Initialisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIG</td>
<td>Australian Industry Group</td>
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<td>AQF</td>
<td>Australian Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>AQTF</td>
<td>Australian Quality Training Framework</td>
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<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSF</td>
<td>Dusseldorp Skills Foundation</td>
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<td>DYAP</td>
<td>District Youth Achievement Plan</td>
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<td>EREAA</td>
<td>Edmund Rice Education Australia</td>
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<td>ETRF</td>
<td>Education and Training Reform for the Future</td>
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<td>FLCN</td>
<td>Flexible Learning Centre Network</td>
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<td>FLCs</td>
<td>Flexible Learning Centres</td>
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<td>FLS</td>
<td>Flexible Learning Services</td>
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<td>GTOs</td>
<td>Group Training Organisations</td>
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<td>IBD</td>
<td>International Baccalaureate Diploma</td>
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<td>KPI</td>
<td>Key Performance Indicator</td>
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<td>LSAY</td>
<td>Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth</td>
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<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
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<td>MTSU</td>
<td>Metropolitan Schools Training Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCVER</td>
<td>National Centre for Vocational Education and Research</td>
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<td>NP YAT</td>
<td>National Partnerships on Youth Attainment and Transitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>OP</td>
<td>Overall Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIFO</td>
<td>Project Implementation Field Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>QACI</td>
<td>Queensland Academy of Creative Industries</td>
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<td>QAHS</td>
<td>Queensland Academy of Health Sciences</td>
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<td>QASMT</td>
<td>Queensland Academy of Science, Mathematics and Technology</td>
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<td>QCE</td>
<td>Queensland Certificate of Education</td>
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<td>QCIA</td>
<td>Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement</td>
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<td>QCWT</td>
<td>Queensland College of Wine Tourism</td>
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<td>QMEA</td>
<td>Queensland Mineral and Energy Academy</td>
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<td>QRC</td>
<td>Queensland Resources Council</td>
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<td>QSA</td>
<td>Queensland Studies Authority</td>
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<td>RTOs</td>
<td>Registered Training Organisations</td>
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<td>RYPS</td>
<td>Registration of Young People System</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>School Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
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<td>SET</td>
<td>Senior Education and Training</td>
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<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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<td>TTCs</td>
<td>Trade Training Centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>VETiS</td>
<td>VET in Schools</td>
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Executive summary

All young people completing Year 12 in Queensland are now expected to attain a qualification. There has been a fundamental change of mindset about the purposes of senior secondary schooling which has challenged education leaders to devise strategies for the achievement of that desired outcome. As part of an Australian Research Council Linkage project with the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET), this research reports on leadership strategies for system-wide multi-level reform that, in this instance, are intended to achieve that outcome for young people (who are notionally 17 years old at the time of completing Year 12).

This Report provides insight into the strategies of educational leaders who are redefining learning relationships with young people in Years 10, 11 and 12. From 2007 to 2010, a range of data was collected and analysed. This included interviews with educational leaders operating at local schools, district, regional offices and state levels of education and training; a questionnaire distributed to education and training, workplace and community agency leaders; policy documents and publicly accessible documents from schools and organisational websites. The findings presented are situated in reference to, and informed by related research in this field.

Background

Leadership in senior secondary schooling is more complex than ever before because educators are challenged to provide access to and engagement in learning and/or earning (l/earning) to Year 12 (or its equivalent) for all young people. School-centric conceptions of education such as ‘compulsory senior secondary schooling’ and ‘youth disengagement from schooling’ do not provide adequate accounts of Queensland’s broad-based, decade long-term reforms in senior secondary schooling, which runs across Years 10, 11 and 12. Significant advances in transitioning young people from schooling into further education, training and work are being achieved by education, training and workplace leaders as they broker safe, legal and responsible integrations of learning and work opportunities for young people. These opportunities are increasingly aligned to those industries which are growing in economic importance and demanding employees with higher levels of qualifications.

The Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) was first awarded in 2008. The leaders responsible for this innovation included accreditation of vocational education as part of this qualification. The number of young people attaining the QCE in the years since continues to grow significantly, at the same time as there have been mounting global and local economic and environmental crises impacting the communities in which they live. There have also been significant changes in the demographics of the Australian population and its workforce (ABS, 2010). The aging of the Australian population is such that in 2001 there were 4.4 workers to every retiree; in 1971 the figure was 7.6 workers for every retiree (Access Economics, 2009). The major change in the workforce has been the decline since 1990 in the number of workers in the manufacturing sector. The major areas of projected employment growth are in construction, health care and social assistance, and professional scientific and technical services (Access Economics, 2009). The Bradley Review (2008) is driving the broad-based long-term reforms in senior secondary schooling as well as in higher education.
Fortunately with the leadership that ushered in senior schooling education and training reform, Queensland is at the cutting-edge of innovative educational reforms and developments. The work of Queensland’s educational leaders in closing the gap in youth attainment and transition, including participation in vocational education in senior secondary schooling is not a matter of measuring how many students in the state are now taking just one vocational subject. Queensland’s leaders have pioneered flexibility in timetabling, and the integration of vocational education into the assessment of capacity and competency required for a qualification that can secure entrance to university, work and/or further education. The state education system has recognised as essential, leadership capabilities that are people oriented and achievement oriented (Queensland DETA, 2006).

The complexities now facing leadership of Queensland, and Australia’s, on-going broad-based long-term reforms in senior secondary schooling arise from their need to work across multiple levels of local, district, regional and state education jurisdictions, industry, training, and community providers. This Project has investigated leadership strategies that engage partnerships across different government and non-government agencies, education sectors, education and training providers, and industries, as well as the more familiar practice of operating at different levels within their own organisation. These strategies also encompass the educational management of dual curriculum pathways with their often-contradictory pressures; and the organisationally focused resourcing for capacity building necessary to facilitate those pathways.

**Project aim**

This project aimed to provide a better understanding of the changing role of education, training and workplace leaders as they engage innovations in senior secondary schooling in Australia. Given their national significance for policy-makers grappling with similar practical problems, it focuses on leaders’ uses of a suite of Queensland innovations in learning for 15 to 17 year olds.

Specifically, the project was designed to:

1. Investigate leadership capacities for engaging and responding to large-scale, multi-level, multi-agency innovations in education, training and work for the senior phase of learning.
2. Explore the socio-economic realignment and integration of young people’s learning and work through the brokering of learning providers.
3. Test the usefulness of a combination of concepts concerning capabilities, multi-level innovation systems, state building, disengagement, and wasted human lives for informing policies and the theorisation of leadership.
4. Explore the potential for developing an approach to research which is beneficial to policy actors and advances knowledge of the good sense in innovations.

To achieve these aims, the main research question was framed as: What strategies are education, training and workplace leaders using to make Queensland’s reforms to senior secondary schooling beneficial for, and to enhance performance of young people?
The Project’s contributory research questions are:

1. What capacity building strategies are being used to facilitate effective workforce reform in senior secondary schooling?
2. In what ways do these strategies facilitate effective partnership management?
3. In what ways do these strategies facilitate effective cross-sectoral individualised learning journeys for young people?

Key findings

We now know that leaders have been selective about their responses to drivers for change in senior secondary schooling. Strategically, education leaders have:

• devised pathways to facilitate successful learning journeys for young people
• built capacity to enable that success
• mobilised partnerships to achieve educational opportunities for young people.

These educational leadership strategies are multi-dimensional. Devised by leaders at various levels of the education system, the strategies are deployed across sectors and aligned with diverse socio-cultural and economic factors impacting senior secondary schooling.

To achieve the goals of the education and training reform agenda in Queensland’s state education system, educational leaders utilising these multi-dimensional strategies have been creating transition pathways, modifying certification, expanding curriculum options, challenging and transforming culture, forming and sustaining partnerships, and increasing public accountability.

Creating transition pathways

Year 10 has been repositioned as transition into a senior phase of learning. The choices of pathways during this transition has been formalised through the use of Senior Education and Training (SET) Plans.

Modifying certification

The senior Year 12 exit certificate was redesigned into a QCE. This expanded the concept of what counts as learning and incorporated the banking of credits¹ for up to nine years after the first credits were registered with the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA).

¹ The QCE is Queensland’s senior school qualification, which is awarded to eligible students usually at the end of Year 12. To be awarded a QCE, students must have at least 20 credits in the required pattern, and fulfil literacy and numeracy requirements. Most students are awarded a QCE at the end of Year 12. Students who do not meet the QCE requirements at the end of Year 12 can continue to work towards their certificate—their learning account remains open, regardless of their age (however, credits expire after 9 years). http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/3167.html
Expanding curriculum options

Curriculum options include not only academic but also vocational learning. This has been achieved by:

- consolidating vocational education and training (VET) certificate courses and workplace experiences into credentialed pathways for Years 11 and 12
- creating learning packages that may include both academic and vocational curriculum.

Challenging and transforming culture

School, community, business and industry cultures have been challenged as to the possibilities of learning so that more young people complete their senior secondary schooling to Year 12. Attitudes, values and beliefs have been challenged to improve the chances for students transitioning successfully into productive post school lives.

Forming and sustaining partnerships

Establishing, maintaining, and where necessary, revitalising partnerships is integral to the brokerage of learning opportunities across the sectoral boundaries of schools, training and further education providers and workplaces. Leaders have recognised that schools cannot do this alone. Accordingly, they have leveraged the intellectual assets of their communities to build resource capacity for this senior secondary schooling.

Increasing public accountability

As the expectation that all young people will achieve a Year 12 qualification has increased, the public’s exposure to some of the accountability measures of that success has also increased. All levels of education (school, regional, state and national) are now implicated in providing publicly available information about school performance and student destinations, and auditing teaching and learning performance outcomes.

By implication, these findings provide a strategic blueprint for addressing future educational leadership challenges aligning students’ individualised learning journeys with the multiple dimensions of ongoing system-wide, cross-sectoral education change. Leadership capabilities must now be considered with multi-level partnership agendas for all phases of learning.

These findings have emerged from an empirically grounded and theoretically informed study of the journey so far in senior secondary schooling with a focus on leaders closing the gap in youth attainment and transitions. These have advanced knowledge of:

1. Leadership capabilities for engaging with and responding to education reform agenda.
2. The brokerage of transition pathways and learning providers for learning contexts.
3. Innovative conceptual frameworks.
4. An inductive/deductive research approach beneficial for examining this complex case of senior secondary leadership.

The findings have contributed to the formulation of a new concept of leadership, *Lì tì* leadership, in recognition of the multi-dimensionality of shifting, merging and sometimes dissolving boundaries between individuals, levels, systems and sectors involved in senior secondary schooling. Global, national and local environmental, socio-cultural and economic issues continue to impact directly and indirectly on an often contradictory and sometimes confusing mix of national, state, local and institutional level policies, management, pedagogical and curriculum interests. These outcomes are of significance to policy-makers working with these cross-sectoral interests in a climate of policy intensification in which Australian, state and territory governments are compounding complexity. The complexity is compounded through sometimes competing or overlapping policy initiatives designed to encourage workforce participation and deal with the broader social and economic influences impacting on young people, their families and communities.
Chapter 1—Introduction

‘Queenslanders will be skilled to maximise their opportunities and productively contribute to Queensland’s economy.’ (Queensland Government, 2010, p. 8)

The world of work continues to change due to changes in the local and global economies, changes borne of ever-advancing technologies, and changes in education and training and their relationship with workplace learning. This complex raft of changes has affected consequent changes in the relationship between learning and earning, and between learners and earners. In response Queensland’s school reform agenda of the past decade has targeted changes in the early, middle and senior phases of learning. The agenda was established in Queensland the Smart State—Education and Training Reforms for the Future (Queensland DET, n.d.; Queensland Government, 2002). This White Paper announced that the rationale for reforms to senior secondary schooling arose from the increasing problem of young people’s disengagement from school-based learning and mounting concerns about the complexities of their transitions from school-to-work and/or further study. About 10 000 young people in Queensland aged 15 to 17 years were said to be disengaged from learning (Queensland Government, 2002). Queensland’s education and training reforms were intended to developing mechanisms for engaging these alienated young people. Changes to senior secondary schooling promised alienated youth the prospects of being ‘assimilated into the emerging patterns of education, training, work and social life’ (Harreveld & Singh, 2007, p. 13).

The purpose of this Report is to provide a research-based understanding of the changing role of education, training and workplace leaders in engaging innovations in senior secondary schooling in Queensland. Education, training and workplace leaders have been and continue to change the future trajectory of young people who were encouraged, and are now required to complete Year 12, or the equivalent. Queensland’s reforms provide a nationally significant insight into the work of education, training and workplace leaders in implementing and sustaining policy-driven change.

1.1 Historically significant policy settings

Reforms in senior secondary schooling build on past achievements while paving the way for further innovations into the future. From 2002 to 2011 a range of historically significant initiatives influenced changes to education and training in Queensland (Appendix 1). Queensland’s reforms to senior secondary schooling were influenced by a series of Government sponsored reports by Pitman (Pitman, 2002) and Gardner (Gardner, 2002). Pitman’s (2002) report, The Senior Certificate: A New Deal, formed the basis for the new QCE. A vision for public education in Queensland was outlined in Queensland State Education 2010 (Queensland Government, n.d.-b). The Youth Participation in Education and Training Act 2003 made it compulsory that a young person participate for two years in either education and training or earning beyond the compulsory school age or before they turn 17 years of age. At the end of 2008, the first cohort of students who participated in the reforms to the senior learning graduated.
To trial the reforms to senior secondary schooling and carry forward their implementation, Queensland adopted two levels of governance. Locally, District Youth Achievement Planning Committees (DYAP Committees)\(^2\) provided cross-sectoral district level coordination of senior secondary schooling reform efforts. At the state level, an Inter-sectoral Advisory Committee was formed to oversee the education and training reforms. The Committee include the Directors-Generals of the (then) Department of Education and the Arts (Chair), Employment and Training, Communities, Premier and Cabinet and the Under Treasurer of the Queensland Treasury. The Committee’s composition provides a clear indication that the reforms required state-wide multi-level, multi-agency leadership.

Flexible funding models enabled schools and TAFE (Technical and Further Education) Colleges to pursue reforms. Central Purchasing Unit funding was targeted at purchasing programs and services for the re-engagement of young people who were already disengaged from schooling. Access to Pathways funding helped young people ‘at risk of disengagement from learning to attain their Senior Certificate or vocational qualifications through flexible learning options’ (Harreveld & Singh, 2007, pp. 33-34).

To evaluate these reforms to senior secondary schooling, a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Framework was developed as part of DET’s strategic planning. The KPIs covered progression, satisfaction of students and staff, participation of young people, attainment of certificates, and the full-time work/study situation of 15 to 19 year olds. The KPIs in DET’s Strategic Plan 2010-2014, aim to have 92.5% of 20 to 24 year olds attaining a Year 12 certificate or its equivalent, or Certificate II by 2015 (Queensland DET, 2010c, p. 10). The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is to be closed via increased student retention to Year 12 (DET, n.d. p. 10). Transitions from completion of Year 12 or its equivalent to participation in further education, training and/or employment are to be improved such that six months after completing Year 12, 88% of school leavers are to be engaged in learning (DET, n.d., p.10).

These KPIs have emerged following the reform of certification of young people’s senior secondary learning from Years 10 to 12. The QCE for students completing Year 12 or its equivalent is a comprehensive qualification. Learning outside school is now part of this new certificate. Areas of learning that are now recognised in the QCE include, but are not limited to, accredited cultural pursuits, approved first-year university subjects, and VET.

In Queensland, some senior secondary schooling subjects included embedded VET units of competency from national, industry endorsed training packages. These count towards an Overall

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\(^2\) ‘The District Youth Achievement Plan (DYAP) is a local plan of action. It is essentially a strategic planning document that places young people at the centre of the picture, and is the key mechanism by which local areas plan, develop, coordinate and implement key ETRF reforms for 15 to 17 year olds in their local area. The overarching purpose of the DYAP is to coordinate programs and services at the local level, across state and non-state schools, vocational education and training providers and other services to cut duplication, use resources more efficiently, and close gaps in service.’ (Queensland Government, n.d., p. 1).
Position (OP) for university entry. Many embedded VET units are not QSA subjects but are Authority-registered subjects. They do not contribute to an OP, but contribute to tertiary entry through a ranking process. Thus, in this sense, VET in Schools (VETiS) in Queensland can count towards university entry, with the caveat that the empirically derived weightings for results in Authority-registered subjects are less (by about half) than those for Authority subjects (Porter, 2006, p. 10).

Individual schools in Queensland may choose to be recognised as Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). This requires schools offering VET to satisfy the requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) to enable their recognition as RTOs. Alternatively, schools can develop relationships with adjacent TAFE Institutes for offering programs in conjunction with the school (Porter, 2006, p. 10).

Since the start of the senior secondary schooling reforms and the issue of the White Paper (2002), there have been many changes. However, the aim has been consistently that of ‘completion of whole Certificates rather than isolated units of competency’ (Porter, 2006, p. 11). The fact that VET programs could offer certificates under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) was seen as a particular benefit to students. The qualifications were recognised nationally, could lead to further tertiary training courses and enhance future employment opportunities (Porter, 2006, p. 18). Porter’s (2006) summary of the worth of Certificates I, II, III and IV acknowledged key features of Australia’s VET system’s qualification framework; namely, its in-built portability and pathways potential.

Australia’s VET strategy from 2004 to 2010 and beyond articulates a clear purpose to develop a skilled workforce that, it is claimed, will contribute positively to business and industry competitiveness in a global economy while also contributing positively to local communities and services (Australian National Training Authority, 2004; Australian Government, Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005). The VET system’s competency-based training and assessment curriculum framework as constructed in industry-specific training packages for workers learning on-the-job and off-the-job in RTOs were not designed especially for senior secondary school students.

After nearly two decades, the impact of VETiS on Year 12 retention has not been as significant as initially envisaged (Nguyen, 2010). Nationally, the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth survey data analysis from 1995 and 2003 cohorts reports that over 90% of senior secondary schools offered VET in some form while 40% of students participated in some form of VETiS programs; with the following conclusions that participation in VETiS:

• has positive effects on attitudes to and satisfaction with school
• assists in post-school employment choices
• assists in successful transitions to the work force
• provides a pathway to post-school VET (although most are not in the same area as the school VET subjects)
• reflects a disposition away from formal study at Certificate III or above—for males mostly
• may be too late by Year 11 and/or 12 because post-school plans change little during those years
• can influence those who are intent on getting a job straight after school to change to consider further VET study or an apprenticeship or traineeship. (Nguyen, 2010, p. 1)

These findings are consistent with Porter’s (2006) investigations which reported that VETiS had also allowed schools to broaden the curriculum and offer more relevant subjects to the majority of non-university bound senior students. The schools also became more engaged with industries and better connected with their community workplaces and employers.

While these initiatives have achieved some successes with regards to the students, teachers, schools, employers and trainers, there were also some problems that needed attention. DET and this Project’s Chief Investigators identified the key research problem for this Project as leadership capacity for implementing and sustaining large scale, complex education and training reform. Queensland’s education and training reform in senior secondary schooling was a nationally significant innovation, where leaders realised innovations across multiple levels and agencies. Innovations of this complexity did not make themselves accessible to leaders in direct or uncomplicated ways, but required capacity building.

This research has identified the ways in which leaders have and are working with innovations in senior secondary schooling. Accounts of innovative programs have been collected from six sites in Queensland. Partnerships between different stakeholders providing learning options for young people; the work of local committees; different delivery modes; and descriptions of programs that support the delivery of education and/or training have been examined. The report provides insights into the career guidance, mentoring and youth support services provided in schools, colleges, workplace and community settings. The work of education leaders at local, district, regional, state and national levels has also been examined.

1.1.1 Education and training leadership in Queensland

For state schools, DET developed a framework, Leadership Matters, which outlined ‘the essential leadership capabilities required of Education Queensland principals at all stages of their career’ (Queensland DETA, 2006, p. 3). The framework identifies capabilities that principals are expected to possess as leaders in Queensland’s globalised economy (Figure 1).
Figure 1: Essential leadership capabilities

![Diagram showing essential leadership capabilities]

Source: Queensland DET, 2006, p. 4

This framework is meant to offer guidance in all leadership development activities for principals and aspiring leaders.

*The Educational, Personal, Relational, Intellectual and Organisational leadership capabilities combine to form a shared understanding of outstanding leadership of Queensland state schools. Highly effective school leaders strive to achieve mastery in each capability area* (Queensland DETA, n.d.).

Categorising leadership capabilities in this way can help leaders’ professional development, and can inform this investigation of leadership in educational reform, especially in Queensland. Table 1 summarises the definitional understandings of these types of leadership capabilities as set out in Leadership Matters.

Table 1: Leadership capabilities contents

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<th>Type of capabilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational leadership</td>
<td>Educational capabilities encompass professional knowledge and understanding of the art of teaching and learning to inspire commitment and achieve quality outcomes for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal leadership</td>
<td>Personal capabilities are the inner strengths and qualities that underpin ethical and professional practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational leadership</td>
<td>Relational capabilities are the interpersonal skills required to develop and maintain quality relationships with a diverse range of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual leadership</td>
<td>Intellectual capabilities require clever thinking, reasoned judgment and wise decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational leadership</td>
<td>Organisational capabilities support continuous school improvement through effective management of human, financial and physical resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Queensland DET, n.d.
In secondary schools, while leadership is officially vested in the principal, there are others who play an important role in the implementation of Queensland senior secondary schooling programs. These school leaders include senior educational administrators, heads of departments, coordinators and advisers. All are engaged in various ways with community organisations, businesses, industries, training organisations, tertiary education providers and other schools to conduct senior secondary schooling programs. They need to overcome many barriers, such as a shortage of teachers, not enough students for one program, timetabling issues for different groups of students, and heavy workloads. They often collaborate with other schools (e.g., Independent and Catholic) and education and training providers to create shared programs. Therefore, leadership in senior secondary schooling also includes leaders from TAFE Institutes, RTOs, industries, universities and local community services.

1.2 Project overview

This Project was established to provide a better understanding of the changing role of education, training and workplace leaders as they engage innovations in senior secondary schooling. Given their national significance for policy-makers grappling with similar practical problems, it focuses on leaders’ uses of a suite of Queensland innovations in learning for 15 to 17 year olds.

Senior secondary education in Queensland was a leader in large-scale, multi-level, cross-agency innovations (Harreveld & Singh, 2009). New legislation had supplied a framework for Years 10, 11 and 12 to ensure Queensland’s young people are learning. Key aspects of this innovation included changes to the compulsory school leaving age from 15 to 16 years; the introduction of registration in Year 10 (or at the latest before turning 16) for the creation of a personal ‘learning account’; a compulsory participation phase in learning or salaried work until the completion of the new QCE or vocational Certificate (Level III), or until turning 17 years, or until two years of participation in education or training has been undertaken. Thus, Queensland provided a nationally significant site for investigating the work of leaders in implementing and sustaining policy-driven change and large-scale reform in the integration and socio-economic alignment of learning and work.

This Project was designed to:

1. Investigate leadership capacities for engaging and responding to large-scale, multi-level, multi-agency innovations in education, training and work for the senior phase of learning.
2. Explore the socio-economic realignment and integration of young people’s learning and work through the brokering of learning providers.
3. Test the usefulness of a combination of concepts concerning capabilities, multi-level innovation systems, state building, disengagement and wasted human lives for informing policies and the theorisation of leadership.
4. Explore the potential for developing an approach to research which is beneficial to policy actors and advances knowledge of the good sense in innovations.
To achieve these aims, the main research question was framed as: What strategies are education, training and workplace leaders using to make Queensland’s reforms to senior secondary schooling beneficial for, and to enhance performance of young people?

The Project’s contributory research questions are:

1. What capacity building strategies are being used to facilitate effective workforce reform in senior secondary schooling?
2. In what ways do these strategies facilitate effective partnership management?
3. In what ways do these strategies facilitate effective cross-sectoral individualised learning journeys for young people?

The significance of these questions is identified in the following section. A more detailed examination of these issues is provided in Chapter 2.

1.2.1 Significance

This research is of significance to policy-makers working to strengthen Australia’s socio-economic system. It occurs in a climate of policy intensification in which Australian, state and territory governments are compounding complexity through sometimes competing or overlapping policy initiatives that encourage workforce participation and deal with the broader social and economic influences impacting on young people, their families and communities.

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) released the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) which replaced the Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA, 1999) and established the direction for Australian educational and training leaders for the next 10 years. In its preamble, the Melbourne Declaration recognises the necessity and importance of senior secondary schooling for young Australians.

Globalisation and technological change are placing greater demands on education and skill development in Australia and the nature of jobs available to young Australians is changing faster than ever. Skilled jobs now dominate jobs growth and people with university or VET qualifications fare much better in the employment market than early school leavers. To maximise their opportunities for healthy, productive and rewarding futures, Australia’s young people must be encouraged not only to complete secondary education, but also to proceed into further training or education (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4).

The Melbourne Declaration includes educational goals for young Australians relating to VET, transitions to work and further tertiary education (MCEETYA, 2008). For instance, educational leaders are to position learners ‘on a pathway towards continued success in further education, training or employment, and acquire the skills to make informed learning and employment decisions throughout their lives’ (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 8). Furthermore, they are expected to develop young
adults who have ‘the confidence and capability to pursue university or post-secondary vocational qualifications leading to rewarding and productive employment’ (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9).

Since then, MCEETYA has developed a Four Year Plan 2009-2012 (MCEETYA, 2009) to accompany the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 12). It contains strategies and actions for educational leaders to support the Melbourne Declaration, and align their work with the targets of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) (COAG, 2009). For senior secondary schooling, the Four Year Plan 2009-2012 supports stronger school-based and system-based partnerships, quality teaching and school leadership to achieve senior secondary schooling completions and youth transitions to further education, training or employment.

Schooling should offer a range of pathways to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of all young Australians, encouraging them to pursue university or postsecondary vocational qualifications that increase their opportunities for rewarding and productive employment. This requires effective partnerships with other education and training providers, employers and communities (MCEETYA, 2009, p. 12).

These strategies and actions are supported by all state and territory governments through COAG. The strategies and actions related to senior secondary schooling and expected of educational leaders include:

- increasing access to high quality, industry-recognised training at Certificate III, including through Trade Training Centres (TTCs)
- increasing partnerships with universities, RTOs, TAFE and businesses, to broaden the horizons of students, support educators and provide students with links to further training, education and employment opportunities
- ensuring all students have access to quality support, information and advice to facilitate access to further education, training, careers, and employment options
- developing and implementing the Australian Blueprint for Career Development, a national framework for lifelong, active career management skills
- increasing access to differentiated and coordinated support and assistance for young people at the risk of disengagement from education and training (adapted from MCEETYA, 2009, p. 12).

By 2009 COAG had formalised its strategy for National Partnerships on Youth Attainment and Transitions (NP YAT) in an agreement with the states and territories. The strategy aims to:

- achieve a national Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate by 20 to 24 year olds of 90% by 2015
- provide an education or training entitlement to young people aged 15 to 24 to make a successful transition from schooling into further education, training or employment better align Commonwealth, state and territory programs and services related to youth, careers and transitions. (COAG, 2009, p. 4)
COAG’s MCEETYA agenda includes the attainment of a ‘Certificate III, including through Trades [sic] Training Centres’, while the NP YAT agreement notes a ‘Certificate II level or above’ for a general adult education qualification in its Year 12 equivalency statement. Year 12 equivalency is defined as being one of the following.

- a Year 12 Certificate (Senior Secondary Certificate) by a Board of Studies
- an equivalent qualification such as the Certificate of General Education for Adults (at Certificate II level or above), the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD) or other higher education pre-entry course
- an AQF Certificate II or higher qualification issued by a RTO or by a higher education institution. (COAG, 2009, p. 4)

1.2.2 Queensland’s response

Through COAG, Queensland works with other states and territories to achieve strategic targets in relation to Year 12 completions or their equivalents, and transitions into socially and economically aligned learning (Queensland DET, 2010c, p. 6). In this context, Queensland policy-makers, regional/district education and training authorities, schools and their communities are using evolving iterations of the Education and Training Reform for the Future’s (ETRF) major innovation agenda in public education to specifically align and integrate three phases of learning outlined in Queensland DET’s Strategic Plan 2010-2014. This is giving children a ‘flying start’ (in the early years); laying strong educational foundations (in the compulsory phase of schooling); and developing skills for the economy through attainment of Year 12 completions and effective youth transitions via multiple pathways from school to tertiary education and training institutions as well as into meaningful work (Queensland DET, 2010, pp. 2-10).

For Queensland, the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions (NP YAT) agreement has meant a 2015 National Partnerships target of 92.5% completion of Year 12 or its equivalent. DET has interpreted that for state public schools, the focus must be on increasing the retention to Year 12 and attainment of a qualification of all 15 to 17 year old students. The attainment rates of 20 to 24 year olds will be used to measure whether or not this target has been met. DET has used data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Education and Work 2001-2008 attainment rate of Certificate II or Year 12 or equivalent to show the gap between current and targeted attainment rates.

Key strategies of this national reform agenda outlined in DET’s response are detailed in Table 2, together with the actions to be undertaken by Queensland’s state schools.
Table 2: Qld strategies for NP YAT: attainment, transition, planning and partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key strategy</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Establish attainment targets for Queensland state schools.</td>
<td>Establish Certificate II or higher as the preferred VET qualification on completion of Year 12. Set a target of 82% of students completing Year 12 to achieve a QCE, IBD, VET Certificate II or higher, or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA) by 2012. Focus on halving the gap in Indigenous Year 12 retention and attainment rates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Support regions to establish attainment and transition strategies relevant to school and community contexts.</td>
<td>Allocate the NP funding to regions to support locally targeted attainment and transition strategies. Support for data driven decision making. Ensure high-quality SET planning, including transition planning for young people at risk of leaving school early or without a qualification. Drive behaviour change to support successful student transitions to post-school destinations. Continue to provide opportunities for students to undertake authentic workplace learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Revitalise regional planning and partnerships.</td>
<td>Review and renew existing community partnerships and support the integration of the new NP funded Community Partnership Brokers and Youth Connections programs. Regional planning for VET priorities and provision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Queensland DET, n.d., p. 2

Other national partnerships agreements affecting Queensland schools include those around teacher quality, literacy and numeracy, and low SES. In addition, this national reform agenda translated into the senior secondary schooling sphere is also impacted by two new national programs: the School, Business and Community Partnership Brokers program; and the Youth Connections program (Queensland DET, n.d., p. 10 of 11).

This is considered necessary when, over the last two decades, the world of work has been transformed as new service and knowledge economies emerged (Beck, 2000; Rifkin, 2000). While there has been research on school-work transitions (OECD, 2000; Teese, 2000), there remains a need for research that avoids school-centric perspectives and integrates the research-based findings of socially and economically aligned learning in a clear and coherent framework.

Three major areas of concern in relation to the changes in senior secondary schooling are engaged in this Project. They highlight the importance of the research problem being addressed. They are:
• concerns about pathways into and from senior secondary schooling driving international and national innovations
• the social and economic challenges of young people leaving school early and/or combining work with study while in senior secondary schooling
• the need for educators to take leadership of innovations designed to enhance successful transitions from school to work, further education and/or training.

1.2.3 The Problem

One of the more pervasive educational problems currently confronting Australia and similar countries is declining completion rates in high schools. Smyth and Hattam (2002) provide a partial explanation of how the cultural geography of high schools contributed to or otherwise affected early school leaving by 209 young Australians. Smyth, McInerney and Hattam (2003) reported that high schools are largely stuck in inherited practices evident in their attachment to pedagogical routines familiar to past generations and socio-economic conditions.

Lee and Burkam (2001) explored how high school structures and organisations influence their students’ decisions about whether to stay in school until Year 12 completion (even though disengaged), or drop out. They found that: in schools whose curricula are composed mainly of academic courses, with few non-academic courses, students are less likely to drop out; students in schools enrolling fewer than 1500 students more often stay in school until graduation; students are less likely to drop out of high schools where relationships between teachers and students are positive. Each of these was contingent upon the organisational and structural features of the high schools, including student and community demographics.

Fallis and Opotow (2003) established that student disengagement and alienation are associated with boredom. Focus group data indicated that this involved systemic elements that foster conflict, exclusion and even violence. Wyn, Stokes and Tyler (2004) reported that young people leaving school early in South Australia, NSW and Victoria were attracted to re-entry programs by the quality of relationships between students and staff, flexible modes of delivery, choice of study areas, and opportunities for personal autonomy.

School-centric policies to re-engage young people disengaged from school-based learning fail to recognise that some of them find more rewarding learning opportunities in other sites. In Queensland, schools’ brokerage of such learning provision and acknowledgement of its worth in the QCE offers unique insights into how and under what conditions leaders use these policies to combine work and study to achieve their aims.

The ETRF agenda promised to give greater consideration to the place of work integrated learning and its accreditation towards attainment of senior secondary schooling qualifications (Harreveld and Singh, 2007; 2008). Since then the ETRF’s early years and middle years of learning reform agenda have also continued with the announcement that from 2015, Year 7 will be part of secondary schooling (Appendix 1). Such complex multi-level and cross-sectoral initiatives require leadership if they are to provide outcomes that provide enhanced life-wide opportunities for all young people.
1.3 Project outcomes

1.3.1 Advancing knowledge

Queensland’s education and training leaders have demonstrated the capability to positively and proactively affect productive innovations in senior secondary schooling.

This Project has documented and analysed the perceptions, experiences and conceptions of education and training leaders operating at the local, regional/district or state levels in responding to and engaging with the large scale innovations in senior secondary schooling. In addressing questions about how leaders use innovations in education, training and work at local, regional/district and state levels, it considered the differing roles and characteristics of leadership in giving carriage to them.

In Queensland’s knowledge-based, service-oriented, resource-driven economy, education and training leaders are innovators who put new knowledge into their particular organisation while simultaneously sharing much knowledge with other agencies.

This capability for ‘beneficial policy action’ includes being selective about external and internal pressures and choosing those that best suit a learning provider’s goals (Grove, 2004; Leithwood, Steinbach & Jantzi, 2002). Leadership involves change and is necessarily implicated in learning (Sergiovanni, 2005). Quality leaders were those who responded positively to change, learned from it and assisted others to do likewise. The shared potential of schools was enhanced when they were viewed as learning organisations with teachers working as professional communities involved in ongoing, reflective learning that complements students’ learning (Silins & Mulford, 2002). Quality leaders promoted professional learning communities, distributed leadership, and gave matters of pedagogy and learning priority in their practices (Mulford & Silins, 2003). In Queensland’s knowledge-based and service-driven economy, leaders are innovators who put new knowledge into their learning organisation while simultaneously initiating processes that develop shared leadership (West-Burnham, 2004).

The collective capacity for leadership that is now practised at multiple levels and across multiple agencies means school and system-centred views of the work of education and training leaders are now limited.

Day (2004) found five elements important to building and sustaining learning organisations; namely: shared norms and values, a focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, sharing practice, collaboration and inclusivity. However, research from the United Kingdom found that school-leaders were being de-skilled, and needed considerable resilience to persevere with their jobs (Stott, 2003; Woods, 2002). More research on how to build innovation leadership capacity within and across learning providers was warranted. This Project explored the limitations of school-centric views of leadership and the collective capacity of leadership that is practised at multiple levels and across multiple agencies.
1.3.2 Conceptual contributions

This study tested the usefulness for policy-makers of concepts from Sen (1992, 1999) (capabilities); Fullan (2004) (multi-level education innovation); Fukuyama (2004) (state building); Furedi (2005) (disengagement) and Bauman (2004) (wasted lives). These conceptual tools provided an interesting, useful and innovative combination of resources for forming and transforming policies governing the relationships among education, training and work. In particular, they enabled us to explore the senior secondary schooling years and post-compulsory transitions as ‘integrated’ (i.e., chronologically, sectorally and systemically meshed), and ‘socio-economically aligned’ (i.e., linked with changing local and global social and economic circumstances now and in the future).

The innovativeness of this Project lies in its use of these concepts for a multi-level analysis of state building achieved through the engagement of education and training leaders in policy action intended to have more prosperous and socially just effects on all young people, including those disengaged from formal schooling and whose lives might otherwise be wasted. These large-scale innovations in senior secondary schooling may be understood as working iteratively through a series of phases to achieve ‘resource-based capacity building’ and ‘results-focused accountability’ (Fullan, 2010a).

Concepts derived from Fullan’s (2010a & b) research on the ‘tri-level’ model of innovation leadership provide useful tools for developing an appropriate conceptual frame. They will also help locate this study in relation to the building of capable and functioning states (Fukuyama, 2004), i.e., able to marry representative and participatory democracy.

1.4 Structure of this Report

This chapter has addressed the historical significant policy settings for reforming senior secondary schooling so as to maximise skills of young Queenslanders and the state’s productivity, and what these meant for education and training leadership. The significance of this Australian Research Council Project has been explained in terms of DET’s, the Partner Organisation, response to and conception of the problem to be addressed.

Chapter 2 examines significant issues that have impacted the developments in senior secondary schooling and its leadership through a focused review of policy and research literature.

Chapter 3 presents a research method for investigating performance enhancement. It includes the research design’s theoretical framework, data collection and analysis methods employed, and ethical considerations encountered.

The following three chapters then provide the evidentiary basis for the Project’s findings. Included in these chapters are five case studies illustrative of successes, challenges and opportunities in senior secondary schooling.

Chapter 4: Leaders changing school culture: curriculum renewal and cultural change
Chapter 5: Leaders building capacity: people, partnerships and pathways
Chapter 6: Leaders closing the gap: challenges for youth attainment and transition.
The report concludes in Chapter 7 with the implications for a multi-level, socio-economically aligned, clever, skilled and creative leadership identified in this Project. The Queensland Government has committed to strengthening the ‘collection, dissemination, use and understanding of performance data, research and evaluation to improve performance and the delivery of services’ (Queensland Government, 2010, p. 8). This Project provides research informed evidence of what works for senior secondary schooling through focused analysis of data in relation to leadership at this school-training-work interface.
Chapter 2—Leading innovations

As more young people were required to be engaged in formal learning beyond 15 years of age, leaders at all levels of the education system integrated the /earning mantra of policy and legislative impost into significant innovations that are now examined through a background of previous research from independent scholars and those commissioned by governments both in Australia and overseas.

The chapter is presented in three sections that identify significant issues in developing senior secondary schooling. First, the contentious concept of young people l/earning is explored through theoretical and policy analyses with emergent leadership challenges identified. Second, the implications of this l/earning agenda for school leadership are investigated for their capacity to support performance enhancement, capacity building for the teaching workforce, and engagements in networks and partnerships. Third, young people’s attainments in graduating from Year 12 schooling and their transitions into the worlds of further education, training and/or work provide knowledge of the multiple pathways and diverse learning experiences that can be achieved from these ‘reformed’ senior secondary schooling years.

2.1 Reconceptualising senior secondary schooling through vocational l/earning

The increasing complexity of senior secondary schooling in Australia can be approached historically by looking across three time periods. First, it is useful to conceive the formation of senior secondary schooling in terms of debates over technical versus academic vocations. In the early twentieth century the debate over public secondary schooling focused on whether it should provide technical or academic training (Bessant, 1972; Connell, 1980). Then as now, some hoped it would meet the needs of industry, commerce and agriculture.

From its earliest times when the legal school leaving age was much lower, public senior secondary schooling was only for a small minority of young people. For example, in 1932 18% of NSW students were enrolled in post-primary schools and of these only 33% completed the fifth year of high school (Bessant, 1972). Thus, effectively 94% students at that time did not complete Year 12. The outcome was a system of senior secondary schooling that perpetuated the relations between its academic functions of securing university admission and structuring Australian professions (MacIntyre, 1985). With a note of irony, Bessant (1972, p. 126) argues that such senior secondary schools were ‘vocational’ because they led students via university to high-paying, powerful positions in the professions.

Second, mass enrolments and immigration from the 1940s to the 1980s resulted in further socio-economic, cultural and linguistic diversification of the student population. During this period, secondary schools expanded to provide a general education, with a core of common subjects linked to the needs of Australian urbanisation and the rising aspirations of city residents (Bessant, 1972; Connell, 1980). However, across Australia the senior secondary schooling years were still designed to select students for university entrance examinations, eliminating those presumed unsuitable for
professional vocations (MacIntyre, 1985). These developments informed debates over whether schools should be isolated from, or integrated into the nation’s system of skilled labour production (Bernstein, 1977).

Yet there was mounting alienation among students who stayed on to Year 12 as they were confronted with an exclusionary, selective senior secondary schooling curriculum (Fensham, 1986). At times of increasing unemployment, technical and further education were seen as providing a solution (Kemmis et al., 1983; Rizvi & Kemmis, 1987). However, Connell, Kessler, Dowsett and Ashenden (1982) report that again vocational approaches to senior secondary schooling failed due to the barriers created by selected interests and exclusivity of the senior secondary schooling curriculum. Moreover, the academic curriculum proved more economical relative to the costs of appropriately resourcing VETiS. Thus, while most students completing Year 12 were not destined for university, most resources were directed to those who were on an academic trajectory.

Third, the development of senior secondary schooling from the 1990s onwards can be understood in terms of the shift from autonomous academic schooling towards heteronomous l/earning (Bourdieu, 1993, 1996). The idea of l/earning began to take hold. This was a response to the privatisation of public enterprises that previously trained many skilled workers, and the restructuring of work, labour markets and the economy due to recurring global financial crises. This was compounded by the never-ending rise of genetic, robotic, information and nanotechnologies, and emergent challenges of climate change. Added to this was the mounting indifference, if not despair among students about senior schooling, and for many their associated disengagement from institutionalised learning.

In the current era, restructured and realigned forms of senior secondary schooling provide meaningful learning pathways culminating in successful education-training-work transitions for some students in some circumstances. Governments claim that young Australians will be the beneficiaries of these senior secondary schooling policies and programs, especially those who have been excluded from or unable to complete senior (MCYEETA 2004; 2008). However, the Australian Industry Group (AIG) and the Dusseldorp Skills Foundation (DSF) (2007) found that, despite government policies and programs, raising youth engagement and attainment in education, training and work is a challenge. Overseas models of senior secondary schooling demonstrate challenges akin to Australia’s (Aarkrog & Jorgensen, 2008; Abrahart, Alvi, Dar, Jena, & Tan, 2008; Association for Career & Technical Education, 2006).

Not all young people share the opportunities and outcomes from senior secondary schooling, in part due to policy and conceptual incoherence in the field. Debates in the literature (AIG & DSF, 2007; Funnell, 2008; Harreveld & Singh, 2008; Quintini, Martin, & Martin, 2007; Smyth, 2006; te Riele, 2007) indicate that this is due to diverse cross-sectoral, inter-systemic responses to:

- the changing profile of Years 10, 11 and 12 students
- inclusion of VETiS
- school-based traineeships and apprenticeships
- recruitment and/or retraining of staff to work with this diverse student population
• creation of teaching/learning spaces beyond schools and in different types of schools
• sustainability of partnerships among learning providers
• new timeframes for teaching and learning
• monitoring the retention and attainment targets for new certificates of education
• concerns about the welfare and education of disengaged young adults
• the necessity for leaders to work at multiple levels, across sectors and in outer suburban, regional, rural and remote sites
• the need for recurrent government investment in structured programs and policies.

Australia’s education and training system is complex, variable and often directly competing with itself in serving labour market needs. An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development review (Hoeckel, Field, Justesen, & Kim, 2008), along with Bradley (2008) noted that rigidities and obstacles in structures, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, along with problems of funding, regulation and governance, limit Australia’s development of an integrated, flexible and responsive education and training system.

There is unfinished business for education leaders who must make sense of qualifications frameworks and curriculum pathways that provide ‘best fit’ learning programs for young people. Little progress has been made in bringing conceptual coherence to this field in the ensuing four decades. However, there have been significant Australian Government, state and territory policy responses.

2.1.1 Australian policies on l/earning

Across Australia, policy responses to the changes in young people’s lives, work and learning have been similar and reflect findings from international initiatives and studies (Australian Government, 2004). In 2009, COAG decided to deliver a Compact with Young Australians through its NP YAT agreements with the states and territories, which are administered through their schools and VET systems (see Appendix 1). For 15 to 19 year olds, it commenced in 2009, while for 20 to 24 year olds the NP YAT agreement has been in effect since 2010.

Known as the ‘l/earn policy’ (Testro, 2010), this national partnership requires young people to participate full time (minimum of 25 hours per week) up to the age of 17 in l/earning. For their part in this ‘compact’, the Australian Government provides both an incentive and a threat to participation compliance. The incentive is an entitlement to a funded education or training place for 15 to 24 year olds so that they can attain a qualification (Year 12 certificate or its equivalent). The threat makes the continued receipt of some types of income support (e.g., Youth Allowance or the Family Tax Benefit, Part A) contingent on participation in either full-time l/earning or approved part-time combinations (COAG, 2009b). Except for those who cannot participate in this way due to special circumstances, opting out is not an option.

Education leaders in Australia’s six states and two territories have interpreted the NP YAT agreement in terms of their own policy, legislative, and systemic frameworks. The Queensland Government’s requirements under the NP YAT are mapped against innovations already undertaken with extra initiatives devised when and where necessary to meet the NP agreement deliverables in COAG’s
Australian Government treasury requirements. For example, the participation requirement is already covered under the amendments already made to the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (see Appendix 1) that established the senior learning compulsory participation phase.

However, with respect to the education/training entitlement for 15 to 24 year olds, the situation is more complex because it involves leveraging off existing purchasing agreements with TAFE Institutes and VETiS initiatives for those 17 years and under. There are also other industry-demand driven funding purchasing agreements with RTOs and Enterprise RTOs under existing national agreements for workforce skills development and economic productivity enhancements (COAG, 2009b).

Significantly, neither the Australian nor the state or territory governments require that all young people remain at school to complete the compulsory participation phase because Year 12 attainment or its equivalent may be completed any time up to the age of 24. In the case of Queensland, this means that the learning accounts opened with the QSA when young people are in Year 10 (notionally 15 years of age), must be kept open for nine years. At any time during that period, young people may bank credit points from credit enabled learning. When they reach 20 points; then they may apply for their QCE. There is as yet no publicly available data on the numbers of young people who are availing themselves of that long-term QCE attainment option because the only providers that are held to public account for these attainment outcomes are the schools. Neither employers nor other education and training providers have to report QCE attainments of their employees/students on internet websites (e.g., My School) or in newspapers or in their annual reports. So public accountability for the reporting of Year 12 attainment outcomes begins and ends with secondary schools.

Furthermore, setting the attainment benchmark at successful completion of Year 12 with a Senior Certificate may not be in the best interests of all young people (te Riele, 2004, 2011). Individual situations may be impacted by a positive work experience, which means that some young people may leave school for full time apprenticeships, traineeships or work. On the other hand, te Riele’s (2004, 2011) research has found that there are still negative ‘push’ factors impacting individual decisions to leave school without completing Year 12; and that for some young people, the options to reengage at a later date hold no attraction because they are ill-equipped either socially or emotionally and/or educationally because of their previous experiences.

Another area of concern is in the manner in which COAG targets will be met through the NP YAT agreements, and the statistical calculation of achievement shifting from 15 to 19 year olds to 20 to 24 year olds. Here specifically is the notion of Year 12 equivalency, which shifts between Certificate III and Certificate II depending on which age group is being targeted for COAG reporting purposes (te Riel, 2011) and which government source document is being consulted. In 2009, MCEETYA identified as essential, ‘Increasing access to and participation in high quality industry-recognised training at Certificate III level for secondary school students, including through Trades [sic] Training Centres’ (MCEETYA, 2009, p. 12). In 2010, the Queensland Government aimed to have all young
people leaving their senior secondary schooling attain ‘Year 12 or equivalent or Certificate II’ (Queensland Government, 2010c, p. 8).

Setting a benchmark vocational equivalent to Year 12 remains problematic, contentious and warrants caution in drawing any conclusions. Recent analyses from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) have used data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) to compare the outcomes by age 25 years of alternative educational pathways with those of completion of senior secondary schooling. Lim and Karmel (2011) argue three dimensions to the notion of equivalency: volume of learning (as per nominal hours of an AQF qualification); course attributes (complexity of content and learning outcomes to be achieved); and outcomes. In terms of all three dimensions, they discounted Certificate II level qualifications for equivalency with a senior secondary schooling certificate and Certificate III qualifications remained under contention because of inconsistencies with the volume of learning and attributes across the different courses leading to that qualification. They conclude that while the notion of equivalence remains ‘a rhetorical device rather than a precise concept’, the vocational qualification ‘equivalent’ to a senior secondary schooling certificate ‘should be at the Certificate III level, not Certificate II’ (Lim and Karmel, 2011, p. 10).

2.1.2 Vocationalising learning

Secondary schooling may be vocationalised by including vocational (practical work oriented) subjects as a minor portion of a general or academic curriculum. This type of vocationalisation differs from school-based VET, which includes personal development (education) and skills to be learning in order to perform specific occupational tasks (training) that in practice are integrated (Lauglo, 2010). This presents a dilemma for education leaders as they grapple with the implications of this distinction, which is further compounded in Australia by a national curriculum that will extend eventually to Year 12. Other issues include the testing of minimum standards for literacy and numeracy, career planning and employability skills, minimum compulsory subject/s (e.g., English), pathways to further education and training post-compulsory schooling. Each state and territory has responded in its own fashion to crafting responses at the level of qualifications, curriculum packaging, and pathways into and out of senior secondary schooling.

Over the last decade in Australia, some aspects of general and academic education have been vocationalised plus VETiS has secured a firm place in senior secondary schooling. Barnet and Ryan (2005) examined the literature for the period 1997 to mid-2003 in Australia including, school-based apprenticeships, work experience, and structured workplace learning. They found the challenges leaders face include:

• low status of VETiS programs and being seen as a ‘soft’ option
• declining real work experience
• VETiS has not kept more young people at school, but it has made school more attractive for those students already planning to continue their studies
• the variable quality of VETiS including job placements
• mistrust and cultural difference between school educators and industry representatives
• hindrance due to being resource intensive
• lack of qualified and enthusiastic teachers and cooperative employers
• concern about the future of VETiS once seed funding ends
• the practicalities of implementing VETiS, especially linking school and worksites. (Barnett & Ryan, 2005)

The findings from this study confirm that at the operational level, integrating VET learning in senior secondary schooling remains problematical. However, their study did not address specifically the issue of vocationalising learning in the senior secondary schooling years.

Porter (2006) investigated the situation in NSW and Queensland, and found that while it may be desirable to integrate learning with vocational and academic curriculum, constraints remain. For example:

• the traditional culture, structure and resourcing of schools affects the degree of flexibility needed for integrating the vocational and general education curriculum
• the prerequisite subjects of tertiary institutions, as well as other post-school career options, necessitates the maintenance of parallel timetabling
• there is a perceived need to provide more individualised education and training programs for VET students
• the greater cost of VET courses, compared with general education subjects
• the competing priorities of the three delivery organisations for VET courses (schools, training organisations and employers).

Thus, challenges remain. For educators they are organisational and operational in nature. Leadership has been identified as crucial to enacting organisation change that will deliver for young people in their transitions from early adolescence and adulthood.

2.2 Leadership for learning

While central government (e.g., national, state and territory) gives impetus to education and training innovations, they are often removed from the localities in which they are used. This requires multiple levels of innovation leadership (Gardener, 2002). Regional, district and local leaders put these innovations to various uses, but they are often restricted by the requirements placed on them by the system’s higher-level leaders who mandate the innovations, albeit with an awareness of leading edge developments already underway on the ground. This proposition is now explored through the literature from overseas and in Australia.

2.2.1 Leaders and leadership

Leaders have the capability to positively and proactively affect productive innovations (Duignan, 2003; Storey, 2004; Woods, 2002; Zammit & others, 2006). This capability for ‘beneficial policy action’ includes being selective about external and internal pressures and choosing those that best suit a learning provider’s goals (Grove, 2004; Leithwood, Steinbach & Jantzi, 2002). Leadership involves
change and is necessarily implicated in learning (Sergiovanni, 2005). In these studies, quality leaders are those who respond positively to change, learn from it and assist others to do likewise. Quality leaders promote professional learning communities, distribute leadership responsibilities, and give matters of pedagogy and learning priority in their practices (Mulford & Silins, 2003). In knowledge-based and service-driven economies, leaders are innovators who put new knowledge into their learning organisation while simultaneously initiating processes that develops shared leadership (West-Burnham, 2004). Day (2004) found five elements important to building and sustaining learning organisations; namely: shared norms and values, a focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, sharing practice, and collaborative inclusivity.

Leadership strategies are legion in the literature from theories of traits, behaviours to typologies of approaches (Lussier & Achua, 2010; Northouse, 2010). Leaders of Australia’s national, state and territory systems and their secondary schools grapple with public reputations and concentrated efforts to be seen to improve students’ test scores (e.g., Year 9 National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)) and Year 12 outcomes attainments. However, leadership remains elusive for all who aspire to it and intuitive for those who can enact it.

Heifetz (1994, p. 253) proposes that leadership starts with anyone who is committed to getting something done through and in company with others.

To discern the larger patterns on the dance floor—to see who is dancing with whom, in what groups, in what location, and who is sitting out what kind of dance—we have to stop moving and get to the balcony (Heifetz, 1994, p. 253).

In this still relevant proposition, Heifetz (1994) established that leadership is both active and reflective. Simkins (2005) also views a key aspect of the leadership challenge ‘from the balcony’ and argues for a ‘sense-making agenda’ rather than a ‘what works’ agenda (pp. 9-26). In other words, people positioned as leaders by their organisational roles or people aspiring to leadership or those who have leadership thrust upon them can seek to make sense of the dynamics of organisational changes and conflicting policy environments by looking for ‘both the ethical and the practical on the individual’s personal values and the collegial wisdom of the group’ (Simkins, 2005, p. 23). Therefore, effective leadership is both position-based (e.g., principal) and distributive (e.g., administrative team and teachers) (Mulford, 2005).

Fullan (2002, 2010a & b) stresses that the principal has ‘awesome’ power and that the role is pivotal to sustainable educational reform and related forms of professional development (2010b). He has consistently maintained that at the heart of school capacity are principals focused on the development of teachers’ knowledge and skills, professional community, program coherence, and technical resources (2002, p. 16).

Leaders at all levels of education systems have to accept that the impact of reform is not easily measured and the commitment to change has to be long-term for any tangible results to be discerned. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that any short-term gains will be sustained over time.
In his more recent work, Fullan (2010a & b) advocates for large-scale institutionalised system’s ‘tri-level’ reform—at school community, district and state levels. Central to the development of this thinking over the last decade is an articulation of the moral purpose of education to make a difference in the lives of young people through precision, personalisation and professional learning of staff (Fullan, Hill and Crévol, 2006).

An Australian study by Mullen and Jones (2008) came to a similar conclusion. They investigated the processes by which school principals initiated teacher/s leadership roles to build and strengthen a culture of professional learning enhancements. They found that teachers valued their principals’ proficiency as communicators, efficiency in handling situations, personal accessibility, and solicitation of their input, particularly in school-wide decisions involving curriculum and instructional practices [and] the opportunity to reflect on and share instructional practices with colleagues (Mullen & Jones, 2008, p. 338).

This study concluded that principals build leadership capacity at their schools by establishing ‘a culture of trust, honesty, and professionalism’, and facilitating opportunities for teacher leadership (Mullen & Jones, 2008, p. 329). Increasingly it is an interest in the ‘collegial wisdom of the group’ (Simkins, 2005, p. 23) that dominates discussions about educational leadership, rather than simply the attributes of the leader as an individual. That is not to say that leadership qualities do not exist; what is being suggested is that these behaviours can be attributed to anyone within the group, rather than being the responsibility of a particular individual.

An organization cannot flourish by relying on the leader at the top: ‘Schools and districts need many leaders at many levels’ (Fullan, 2002, p. 20). Therefore, working together towards a common goal emerges as a key ingredient to successful professional learning and the performance enhancements required by policy initiatives. The question remains as to whether any model of leadership—hierarchical or distributed—directly enhances student outcomes. Leaders may make significant indirect contributions to student learning outcomes in schools that are ‘strongly influenced by the principals’ core personal values and by the development of a shared organizational values base’ (Mulford, 2005, p. 321). The enhancement of teacher capacity via the creation of a trusting and collaborative climate and appropriate professional development may signal a critical link among leadership capability, teacher work and student performance outcomes (Mulford, 2005).

This assumes that leadership can assist in the promotion of professional learning in a school; similarly, all professional development is based on an assumption that improved quality of teaching has a positive impact on student learning. However, an ongoing dilemma for any research activity in this area lies in avoiding the temptation to attribute cause and effect relationships to such highly variable human activities.
2.2.2 Leading capacity building

The Queensland Government will:
‘… develop a high quality, skilled and professional workforce.’ (Queensland DET, 2010c, p. 8)

Currently in the world, most societies are engaged in some form of education and training reform that requires capacity building of their workforce/s. Some of these reforms are initiated at the national level to be implemented at the local level. Regardless of the scope of the reform, the relationship between these reforms and staff capacity building is a two-way, or reciprocal, relationship (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). This section reviews relevant research literature on developing a high quality, skilled and professional workforce, including leaders’ strategies for teacher capacity building.

Developing teachers’ capabilities for making changes in curriculum organisation, its specification, sequence and providers can offer young people flexibility and choice. However, senior secondary schooling depends on the involvement and commitment of an increasing number of employers, community agencies, industry trainers and support workers to make the learning opportunities for young people a reality. Schools organise the knowledge their students are supposed to learn through core or extra curricula provision. Young (2008, p.173) defines curriculum as ‘the specification and sequencing, in terms of content, of the knowledge and skills that a learner is expected to have acquired’.

Contextualising learning through vocationally oriented experiences in both academic and VET curriculum pathways develops essential competencies not only for school, but also for life-long learning (Harreveld & Singh, 2008). Nevertheless, with different senior certificate qualifications and curriculum pathways, ‘not all schools are proceeding at the same rate with such flexible provision for all their students’ (Asher, 2005, p. 68). To realise the potentiality of such pathways though, partnerships are necessary if young people are to avail themselves of the opportunities they now have to construct individualised learning programs for their senior secondary schooling years.

Taylor (2006) identified the complexities of organising partnerships through studying a high school apprenticeship program that included tensions in relationships among schools, trainers, government and employers which were rooted in differing institutional practices, value conflicts and power relations in the workplace. He found that ‘effective partnerships require social cooperation and institutionalised linkages among schools, colleges, trainers, unions and employers’; and that ‘the diversity of goals and practices within partnerships may result from differences in partners’ economic resources, knowledge, cultural capital, status and values’ (Taylor, 2006, p. 320). While this diversity may be a valuable feature of partnerships in terms of learning, the sustainability of partnerships requires that organisational procedures being put in place to address constraints and conflicts. Organising resources and organisational support structures is important, given that social partnerships tend to be a ‘risky business’ (Taylor, 2006). These organisational issues include funding security, capacity building, and networking opportunities for partnership staff and greater recognition for partnership work.
The Queensland Government advocates ‘enhanced networks and collaboration among industry, the training sector and the higher education sectors’ (Queensland Government, 2010, p. 8). At the national level, partnerships with ‘universities, registered training organisations, TAFE and businesses’ are considered necessary, ‘to broaden the horizons of students, support educators and provide students with links to further training, education and employment opportunities’ (MCEETYA, 2009, p. 12).

2.3 Leadership for youth attainments and transitions

Senior secondary schools are now expected to provide multiple curriculum pathways with appropriate pedagogies to engage all young people so that they will transition successfully to employment, further education or training. In the process, they are also expected to ensure that all young people attain a Year 12 certificate or its equivalent. There are three key points of complexity evident in this exhortation. First, the nature of the ‘equivalency’ qualification is identified as contradictory in the policy and scholarly research literature. The very curriculum pathway opportunities that have opened up choices for young people at an early age have also served to produce qualifications of different types, designed to be used for different purposes, yet all counting with various weightings towards the Year 12 attainment qualification.

Second, the data capture systems for recording student participation, attainment and transition upon which statistical analyses are made at various levels of the education and training systems are not necessarily congruent. In principle there would be one system which could be interrogated through a range of analytics as required for reporting purposes. This was the original intention of the Registration of Young People System (RYPS). In practice, individual providers (including secondary schools) collect their own data, each government department collates its data (at state and national levels) for its own purposes, and commissioned research allocated to agencies use hybrids of these data as well as collecting their own data, e.g., the ABS; NCVER; and the Australian Centre for Educational Research. In addition, scholars undertaking private and commissioned research utilise these various data sets to conduct their own second-level analyses and interpretations.

Third, credits towards the Year 12 attainment qualification (the QCE) may be ‘banked’ and counted for up to nine years from first opening the account at the notional age of 15 years in Year 10. Consequently Year 12 attainments may be calculated at any time up to 24 years of age. However, there is an anomaly here in the pressure on schools to have all young people attain that qualification before they leave school and have it reported in their school outcomes data, which is published on websites, and in newspapers. If young people have up to nine years to attain that qualification; then why is there pressure to attain it earlier?

Public accountability for Year 12 attainment is focused on the outcomes three years into that period while the public may be not aware that the judgements may be deferred for another six years. The calculation and publication of Year 12 attainment from all education and training providers for cohorts of young people at 24 years of age would, in this logic, be more appropriate. Yet schools are held publicly accountable for Year 12 outcomes at the point of transitions to post-school life so it is in this context that the following analysis has been prepared.
2.3.1 Multiple pathways and diverse learning experiences

The Queensland Government will:
‘… provide multiple pathways and diverse learning experiences to engage senior students’, and ‘develop and support more effective pathways from school, between school and tertiary education and training institutions, and into work’. (Queensland DET, 2010c, p. 8).

The introduction of VETiS has significantly changed senior secondary schooling operations. Two reasons for introducing VETiS into senior secondary schooling were to expand ‘opportunities for senior secondary students, and to prepare young people for the workplace of the future [by providing] young people with better links to industry, and more diverse pathways from school to work and further study’ (Anlezark, Karmel, & Ong, 2006, p. 13). However, as has been already noted, the implementation of senior secondary schooling is affected by several factors; namely, the policy goals and strategies of national, state and territory governments; the curriculum knowledge that can be provided in each school; teachers’ capacity building; schools’ public communications; and the unpredictable relationship between work and students’ preferred post-school pathways (Smith, 2004).

Are approaches to senior secondary schooling, which provide pathways to local employment successful in retaining students who may have otherwise left school early? Do such approaches to senior secondary schooling assist them make successful transition from school to work? Karmel (2007) reports that senior secondary schooling appeared to have improved Year 10 to Year 11 retention but has not reduced the decline in retention from Year 11 to Year 12. He found that retention was not the only motivation for senior secondary schooling curriculum changes; a contrary motivation is the desire to improve transition to the labour market. Karmel (2007) concludes that on the whole senior secondary schooling pathways in their current iterations have been positive. They have broadened the choices available to young people, and for some it has provided transitions into meaningful work or study that was not previously available.

However, the school-to-work transition remains complex. For instance, Marks (2005) contends that the teenage labour market is increasingly characterised by part-time and casual work. Much of this work is in low-skill occupations. Consequently, school-to-work transition remains problematic for a substantial proportion of young people (Marks, 2005). Feinstein and Peck (2008) explore different pathways through diverse education systems. Differences between individuals and/or groups reveal the unpredictable or unexpected pathways that students follow as they transit these complex systems. They found that how personal and contextual risks and opportunities interact to determine the quality of both individual life paths and the social context in which these life paths unfold (Feinstein & Peck, 2008, p. 17).

The empirical evidence from this study shows that short-term interactive processes can have long-term developmental effects. Feinstein and Peck (2008) argue that policies should be designed to recognise, appreciate and respond to the heterogeneity and local-level complexity of the micro-systems in which they are designed to impact. In concert with te Riele (2004, 2011), they contend that...
the challenge in dealing with heterogeneity lies in finding a balance between recognising elements of individual variability that impact on a young person’s development, and making interventions work in practice with groups.

Policy has a role in empowering local services but cannot determine the exact practice to be followed in every given circumstance (Feinstein & Peck, 2008). The expansion of senior secondary schooling through differentiating the curriculum to include vocational pathways based on the belief that the possession of vocational skills would render school-leavers more attractive to employers. In addition, it was believed by some that the introduction of vocational curricula would be attractive to ‘non-academic’ students and encourage them to stay on to finish their schooling (Smith & Wilson, 2004, p. 64).

Through the VET curriculum, senior secondary schooling is implicated in Australia’s labour market. With the current skills shortage young people who perform well on work experience placements or in school-based apprenticeships or traineeships are attractive to employers. Such exposure to the youth labour market also operates when the youth labour market is under stress and governments seek mandatory learning contributions from young people. At the state and territory level, senior secondary systems VET pathways are oriented to support students obtaining VET qualifications to meet the labour market demand (Keating, 2009). All VET qualifications are now competency-based (Smith, 2010). The competency-based training is assessed through training packages which ‘consist of industry- or occupation-based collections of units of competency which are ‘packaged’ together into qualifications at different levels’ (Smith, 2010, p. 55). She claims that the competency-focused senior secondary schooling benefits students ‘of lower educational achievement to attain a qualification because of the emphasis on ‘doing’ rather than ‘academic’ work’ (Smith, 2010, p. 60). However, young people have to first participate in senior secondary schooling before they can attain educational outcomes.

2.3.2 Participation, attainment and transition outcomes

Despite the vast range of initiatives addressing participation, attainment and transitions, they have yet to impact positively the life-study-work balance for all. The State of Australia’s Young People report was commissioned by the Australian Government’s Office of Youth and undertaken by Muir and others (2009). In an analysis of key findings from that report concerning young people from 12 to 24 years of age, Edwards (2010, p. 18) found that there are still young people who are ‘at risk of poor educational attainment and performance, particularly young Indigenous Australians, those from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds and those living in rural and remote areas’. The ABS (ABS, 2011) national measurement of Year 12 attainments reports that in 2010 ‘around 1.2 million young adults (aged 20-24 years) had attained Year 12’; and that ‘over the past decade the proportion of 20-24 years olds with Year 12 had gradually increased, rising from 71% in 2001 to 78% in 2010’ (p. 1). Yet not all appear to have attained a Year 12 certificate.

The ABS (ABS, 2011, pp. 1-5) collection and analysis of these social trends found that Year 12 attainment rates were lower for young adults living in regional (67%), and in remote areas (64%), for young adults for whom neither parent had attained Year 12 (68%), and for young adults with a
disability or restrictive long-term health condition (62%). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have not attained Year 12 at the same proportional rate as non-Indigenous Australians. For example, ‘In 2008, around one-third (31%) of young Indigenous people (20-24 years) had attained Year 12 compared with over three-quarters of non-Indigenous 20-24 year olds (76%)’ (ABS, 2011, p. 4). The Queensland Government (2010, p. 8) aims to ‘improve participation and qualification outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders, focusing particularly on Certificate III and above qualifications’ so as to close ‘the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Year 12 or equivalent attainment outcomes’.

These data show that Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people living in rural and remote communities are more at risk of not attaining a Year 12 certificate than their metropolitan counterparts; and of those, boys are more at risk than girls. To engage students to participate in learning, to retain them to attainment of a Year 12 certificate, and for them to then transition successfully into meaningful life/work balances requires strong economic, social and cultural reasons for staying at school.

Marks (2005) also analysed LSAY data and found that in post-compulsory schooling, young people up to the age of 25 years were engaged in five main categories of activities: full-time study; full-time work; part-time work; looking for work (unemployed) and other. The latter comprises young adults not in the labour force and not in full-time education. The analysis focused on the issues of whether post-secondary non-university full-time study improves employment outcomes, and the impact of part-time work on subsequent activity. Marks (2005) concluded that the main activities of the young people in the four years after leaving school saw the proportion in full-time work strongly increased. The evidence from this study shows that ‘in each of the first four years after leaving school about 75 per cent were fully engaged, that is either working or studying full-time, and 25 per cent were in marginal activities’ (Marks, 2005, pp. 368-369).

Nearly half of these young people judged themselves to be working in a career-type job with their prospects after leaving school and that their occupational status had increased since they left school. Marks (2005, p. 381) found that there was ‘very high year-to-year stability of full-time work, and considerable movement to full-time work from full-time study, part-time work, unemployment and “other” activities’. These findings show that the school-to-work transitions are less problematic when there is a considerably lower rate of unemployment. It also suggests that under these conditions part-time work is not a ‘dead-end’ activity and it is not as disadvantageous to future full-time work as unemployment or withdrawal from the labour market (Marks, 2005, p.382).

Early work experiences play important roles in career exploration and planning for high school students. Creed, Patton and Prideaux (2007) found that such work experience is associated with developing and maintaining students’ career focus. Moreover, they established that enhancing career or occupational self-efficacy among adolescents produces changes in their career focus and behaviours by increasing their career motivation. However, they also reported that less able students ‘require more assistance to engage in career development activities and different strategies to increase their level of career engagement’ (Creed, Patton & Prideaux, 2007, p. 389).
Young people’s transition pathways are not always smooth (te Riele, 2004 & 2010). Vaughan (2005) found a complex array of imperatives young people face when choosing careers; from the multiple choices regarding education, training and work; issues compounded by the convergence of the wider international labour market; and societal trends. To help them find a reliable and enjoyable career, Vaughan (2005) argued that they need support as they pass through stages of apparent indecision and changes of heart as they come to adapt to workplace identities. Kuczara (2010, p. 22) suggests career information contain ‘accurate, available and accessible’ information on ‘courses, occupations and career pathways’. Career-related skills such as self-awareness and understanding of career opportunities were found to be associated with student performance in-school and their post-school destinations (Kuczara, 2010). The boundaries among senior secondary schooling curriculum pathways are now blurred as students can either ‘mix-and-match’ subjects and courses in various combinations or they can choose a one-track package (e.g., vocational or academic). Students have different needs, but with a wide range of options they are more likely to find one that fits them best (Kuczera, 2010).

Students, parents, employers, industry trainers, college and university lecturers, non-government organisation staff, school teachers and education managers are all stakeholders in this senior secondary schooling curriculum with its multiple pathways for attainment and transition. Yet there are no publicly available findings from any comparative research undertaken to ascertain the standing of QSA subjects, IBD subjects and the VET courses with all stakeholders. Whether students are able to take full advantage of these curriculum pathways depends on a number of organisational factors, not all of which are under the control of the school.

Smyth and Fasoli (2007) posed the question of how to run organisations such as schools where ‘workers’ (students) may have very little incentive to work and their supervisors (teachers) have very little power to force them. In other words, the challenge remains ‘how to understand and respond educationally to the issue of students’ emotional, psychological and physical disengagement from school’ (Smyth & Fasoli, 2007, p. 276). The evidence from these studies make a crucial and fundamental point; namely, that it is difficult to organise the conditions necessary for all young people to connect to, belong to, and remain in a school.

**Summary**

Issues of significance emerging from this review of the literature are:

1. The policy of learning has become a prime socio-economic driver of senior secondary schooling policy for state and national education and training systems.
2. Leadership strategies for building capacity among the education workforce are designed to operate at multiple levels, enhance teaching performance, mobilise networks and develop partnerships.
3. Young people’s participation in and attainment of a Year 12 qualification occurs through multiple curriculum pathways in a range of education, training and workplace learning environments.
4. Outcomes from senior secondary schooling reported publicly on a per school basis are showing that entrenched disadvantages still exist in comparative terms of SES, rural and remote location,
chronic health conditions, disability, first-in-family to complete Year 12, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait background.

The following chapter sets out the Project design to investigate this innovation. It includes methodology, data collection and analysis methods as well as ethical issues encountered and addressed.
Chapter 3—Research approach

The contemporary changes in senior secondary schooling are responses to, and expressions of multifaceted trends. A case study approach was chosen to understand the complexities of leadership, to generate and present the necessary empirical data (Berg, 2007; Yin, 2009) to address the Project research questions. The main research question examined a specific issue in relation to the senior secondary schooling phenomenon identified in the previous chapter. That is: What strategies are education, training and workplace leaders using to make Queensland’s reforms to senior secondary schooling beneficial for, and to enhance performance of young people?

The Project’s contributory research questions are:

- What capacity building strategies are being used to facilitate effective workforce reform in senior secondary schooling?
- In what ways do these strategies facilitate effective partnership management?
- In what ways do these strategies facilitate effective cross-sectoral individualised learning journeys for young people?

As a rigorous, robust form of educational research, case study methods were used in this Project ‘to generate rational knowledge that has a significant and worthwhile effect on the decisions and judgements of educational policymakers and practitioners’ (Carr, 2007, p. 271). The research was undertaken from June 2007 to September 2011. To ensure the currency of the literature reviewed, this process continued throughout the life of the Project. A theoretical framework of key concepts was also developed to inform the data collection and analysis processes which are now reported.

3.1 A theoretical note

Queensland’s large-scale, on-going reforms to senior secondary schooling are producing a new era of education, training and work for young people. Current reforms are an iteration of previous generations of reform that aim to achieve capacity building of leaders through a focus on key results; namely, positioning young people to pursue high level of qualifications and for employment in fields of economic growth (Bradley, 2008).

A novel combination of innovative concepts was chosen to inform the data collection and analysis processes; namely, capability (Sen, 1992 & 1999) and multi-level leadership (Fullan, 2010). These conceptual tools provide an interesting, useful and innovative combination of resources for investigating transformative policies impacting the relationships among education, training and work. In particular, they provide tools for exploring senior secondary schooling as ‘integrated’ and ‘socio-economically aligned’. That is to say, they mesh across industry sectors and across education systems; are linked with local and/or global responses to, and expression of changes in socio-economic circumstances now, and those projected for the future (Access Economics, 2009). These concepts provide for the multi-level analysis of the leadership capabilities associated with engaging reforms in
leaders, training and work (Anyon, 1994); and reforms meant to address disengaged young people whose lives might otherwise be ‘wasted’ (Bauman, 2004).

Three key analytical concepts of a ‘lived-perceived-conceived’ triad were used to inform the design and framing of the data collection process and instruments. The assumption was that these are interconnected so that analysis could be move from consideration of one to another without confusion. Lefebvre’s (1991) definitions of lived experience, perceptions and conceptions form a point of departure for the definitions we developed. In this study, ‘lived’ refers to leaders’ use and/or inhabiting of experiences, such as pedagogical and curriculum content knowledge. Lived experience is complex and distinctive because layers of schools, colleges, family, home and workplace culture/s intervene.

Perception means propounding and presupposing a work/education/life trajectory in a dialectical interaction with daily realities (routines), and the deciphering of projected possibilities through routes and networks (pathways). This is a competence and performance that can be ascertained empirically. However, while a leader’s perceptions may be cohesive, they are not necessarily logical and intellectually conceptualised. Conception refers to intellectually worked out concepts (key words, metaphors and/or diagrams, symbols, images, schematics) about which leaders speak and/or write. Conception is the dominant focus of knowledge production in modern societies.

In this Project we assumed it that it is not only social scientists (such as Lefebvre) who can identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived (thought); education, training and work leaders can do likewise. Thus, the ‘lived-perceived-conceived’ triad provided the focus for this Project’s data collection and guided its analysis framework.

This meant it was possible to make visible, and add to knowledge about the work of leaders in closing the gap in youth attainment and transition through brokering of integrated, socio-economically aligned senior l/earning. In this way the Report contributes to the debate over the revision, realignment and reclaiming of education, training and work leadership to prepare senior secondary schooling for a markedly changed world (Latour, 2004; Mullavarapu & Prasad, 2006). By addressing the challenges of imagining, identifying and establishing viable policy trajectories (Sumsion, 2006), this Report illuminates the ‘elements of good sense’ (Apple, 2001, p. 193) found in the perceptions, conceptions and lived experiences of leaders engaging in and responding to innovations in senior secondary schooling.

3.2 Developing the case

This Project’s flexible research design (Robson, 2002) made it possible to situate the collection and analysis of the primary data in relation to current Queensland and Australian policies, as well as relevant national and international research literature. This research Project incorporated a variety of data sources and used rigorous processes of member checking to analyse and interpret the data. During data collection and analysis the research team made an advantage of unpredicted opportunities and employed the necessary care to guard against potentially biased procedures. This cyclical,
iterative, and flexible research approach made it possible, when necessary, to alter and revise relevant aspects of the Project as it progressed. For example, as with all case study research (Yin, 1994; Yin, 2009), we found it necessary to modify the selection of case study sites and boundaries as new information emerged. This approach entailed exploring the multi-level, cross-sectoral and inter-systemic educational connections, forces and imaginings present in the work of these leaders in Queensland’s metropolitan, rural and regional school communities (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002).

This case study presents a detailed account of leadership in senior secondary schooling (descriptive) that explains its key characteristics (explanatory), grounded in empirical evidence and theoretically informed interpretations. Thus, the case illuminates the general features of leadership in senior secondary schooling by looking at particular instances. The processes for the collection and analysis of data that informed these case scenarios are now elaborated.

3.3 Data collection

Data collection for this study addressed the main research questions which concerned leadership strategies that would be beneficial for young people’s learning journeys; the building of leadership capabilities, and school-industry partnerships. The data set of these leaders’ experiences, perceptions and conceptions of their reform strategies included interviews and questionnaires, as well as statistics, policies and school documents.

All data collection and analysis procedures were conducted in accordance with the approved ethical protocols of both DET and the Central Queensland University (CQU) (Project Number H07/09-092). We followed the principles and procedures of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) (Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council, n.d.). Anonymity of participants’ identities has been preserved in all evidentiary excerpts. The confidentiality of information provided has been respected as per the University’s procedures for the ethical conduct of research. This means that place names and organisational names have also been anonymised where necessary. Where publicly available data have been accessed from internet websites, place and organisational names have been preserved.

Statistics

It was necessary to analyse statistical data relating demographics; young people’s immediate post-school destinations; industry/business types; school, regional, state and national socio-economic indicators. The statistics for this study come from Queensland’s Next Step survey (Queensland DETA, 2005, 2006; Queensland DET, 2009b, 2010a; Queensland DETA, 2007, 2008), the ABS (2011), and NCVER (2009). They were initially analysed and reported by Li (2011). Extracts pertinent to the issues of concern in this Project have been collected and used as evidence in the development of the case.
Leaders Closing the Gap in Youth Attainment and Transitions

Policies

In addition to DET information about school curricula, staffing profiles, reviews, and evaluations, the policies and agreements COAG, DEEWR, MCEETYA, The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs were collected and analysed. Key among the documents collected for this research was the national and Queensland Government policies.

Publicly available documents

Documents in the public domain provided a key source of data for this Project. School annual reports and school newsletters publicly available on internet websites proved especially helpful.

Semi-structured, focused interviews

Members of the research team conducted individual and small group semi-structured interviews throughout 2008 and 2009. All interviews were transcribed, and copies provided to the relevant interviewees for member checking.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed based on a preliminary analysis of the interviews in order to test whether others shared these views. The compilation and administration of this questionnaire was also part of the member checking process.

These data were collected over the course of four iterative phases: gathering and analysing field documents, interviewing, and administering the questionnaire. Documents were collected during fieldwork activities as well as from the information publicly available on school and Departmental websites. Interviews were digitally recorded; then transcribed for several cycles of analysis. The questionnaire was designed as the first member checking technique mid-way through the Project. Further details about the processes for conducting the interviews and administering the questionnaire are outlined below.

3.3.1 Interviews: sampling of sites and selection of key informants

Interviews were conducted in urban, regional and rural centres throughout Queensland. The sites were selected to be representative of:

- communities in which large industries played a major economic role and contributed to learning partnerships
- areas in which several partnerships had been forged between new and emerging industries and schools
- towns where there had been significant innovations to transform rural industries and hence pathways for young people
- partnerships in which where there were well-established collaborative relationships between private and state schools.
Sampling procedures used in choosing the research sites and informants for this Project took into consideration findings from the ongoing literature review, government policy drivers, and nominations by DET officials of innovative cases. Sampling was also guided by issues concerning the participants’ time and the available Project resources (Silverman, 2006). These procedures enabled the selection of research sites and key informants who could provide insights into key features and processes related to the research questions.

Seventy-two (n=72) interviews were conducted. Some people were interviewed more than once as part of the confirmatory process after the questionnaire findings were analysed. In addition, a selective sample of five informants contributed to the member checking processes.

- DET leaders (education and training) (n=18)
  - state-wide leaders
  - regional leaders (Regional Executive Directors, Executive Directors Schools, TAFE directors)
  - ETRF coordinators
- other government departments (regional managers, n=3)
- school, college, academy based leaders (n=28)
  - principals: secondary schools, technical colleges, academy
  - senior leadership team (deputy principals)
- middle management, i.e., heads of department, faculty, coordinators both subject-specific and VET, school-industry partnerships
- community and industry leaders (n=20)
  - state-wide representatives of industry peak bodies, large and medium enterprises
  - regional careers advisors and ETRF project managers, industry cooperatives including group training
  - local VET consultants and community partnerships, Skills Centre managers
- student workers nominated by informants (n=3).

The interview format was semi-structured in that the interviewers followed an initial set of research questions with provision for additional more detailed probes as these became necessary. As each interview was completed, the digital audio recordings were transcribed, and then each transcript was emailed to the relevant interviewee for review. On return, each reviewed transcript was then entered into a password secure endnote ‘library’ for later data analysis.

3.3.2 Generating a questionnaire from the interviews

From preliminary analysis of the interview transcripts, questions were formulated for the questionnaire around two themes that emerged: working as a leader at the education-industry interface; and leaders forming and maintaining partnerships among education, training and industry. In addition to data about the type of work undertaken with young people, their role in the organisation and the nature of partnerships experienced, the questionnaire included a seven-point Likert scale with questions related to the following three issues:

- characteristics of partnerships in senior secondary learning
• leaders who work with young people
• characteristics of leadership in senior secondary learning.

Crucial distinctions emerged regarding the style and wording of the questions in the questionnaire, which aided in formulating the questionnaire for administration more broadly.

A desktop audit of Queensland’s education, business, industry, and community training and skills websites was conducted to elicit contact details for prospective recipients. Via a snowballing process, interviewees had also nominated people whom they considered should be invited to participate. The survey questionnaire was then distributed via email to 144 prospective participants. A follow up hard copy of the survey was also sent out by ordinary mail with a reply paid envelope included. Twenty-nine surveys were returned; a disappointing response rate of approximately 20%. Of those, the participants were representative of state government departments (n=7), non-government organisations (n=3), private companies (n=2), local community partnerships (n=4), state secondary schools (n=4), Group Training Organisations (GTOs) (n=4), other education and training providers (n=5).

3.4 Data management and analysis

Interview transcripts, questionnaires, descriptive statistics and documents were analysed as ‘cultural stories’ (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p. 197). This approach meant treating the responses from the interviewees, questionnaire respondents and the information gleaned from documents as expressing perceptions, conceptions and lived experiences of leadership in the changing culture(s) and spatial practices (Lefebvre, 1991) of senior secondary schooling.

For data analysis we used established procedures of open coding, focused coding and the creation of evidence-driven excerpt commentary units (Emerson, Frets & Shaw, 1995).

Open coding

This initial analytical step involved reading the documents, statistical data, questionnaire responses and the interview transcripts, writing memos, developing tentative conceptual categories, comparing and contrasting, and then mapping the patterns that made explicit the interrelationships among these categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Maxwell, 2005). Coding enabled the data to be re-arranged into categories that facilitate comparison among evidentiary excerpts from different sources but in the same category and aided the development of concepts.

Focused coding

The focused coding entailed searching the initial categories generated through open coding for those which pointed to data in the corpus which were the most salient (Saldaña, 2009). The categories assigned to the mass of evidentiary excerpts were then organised into systematic coding schemes and their relationships established through matrices and concept maps (Berg, 2007, p. 319).
This stage of the data analysis process was determined by codes constructed from DET’s Strategic Plan 2010-2014 (Queensland DET, 2010c) and the MCEETYA four-year plan for 2009-2012 (MCEETYA, 2009). Table 3 identifies the relationships among the Project’s research questions, the data analysis focus and the codes derived from the latter sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Codes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What strategies are education, training and workplace leaders using to enhance performance of senior secondary schooling for young people?</td>
<td>Leadership strategies for:</td>
<td>• governance frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What capacity building strategies are being used to facilitate effective workforce reform in senior secondary schooling?</td>
<td>Capacity building for workforce reform</td>
<td>professional development pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways do these strategies facilitate effective partnership management?</td>
<td>Partnership management</td>
<td>• industry engagement strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• networks across sectors</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• sustainability of initiatives</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• partnerships with universities, RTOs, TAFE and businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways do these strategies facilitate effective cross-sectoral individualised learning journeys for young people?</td>
<td>Transitions and outcomes</td>
<td>• multiple pathways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• diverse learning experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• attainment of VET Certificates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Indigenous participation and qualification outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• attainment Year 12, equivalent, Certificate II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• reduce gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Year 12 or equivalent outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• post-Year 12 transitions to further education, training and/or work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on these focused codes, we developed ‘a hierarchical structure’ (Bazeley, 2007, p. 32) of issues in terms of their relevancy to the research questions. From there we moved to creating commentary units driven by the evidence and informed by conceptual insights.
Evidence-driven conceptual commentary units

The latter were generated by selecting relevant evidentiary excerpts, writing conceptual focused interpretations, providing an introduction which identified the key analytical point and provided orienting information that links the concept and the evidence (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Singh, 2011). This approach to evidence-driven conceptual analysis was developed to make sure that the conceptual analysis fore-grounded the relevant key features of the evidentiary excerpt, and to ensure that the evidence could justify our interpretations.

3.4.1 Research education and training

For the purposes of this Project, Harreveld and Singh (2009) worked in a co-mentoring relationship sharing their respective skills, and their differing knowledge of theory, research and policy. Integral to the researchers’ professional learning through this Project was their provision of a structured research education program which trained three higher degree research students (Chen, 2011; Cui, 2011; Li, 2011) and two research assistants. Together Singh and Harreveld collaboratively supervised and provided research education for these doctoral students and research assistants.

The three higher degree research students successfully completed their PhDs and will be graduating in 2011. Their research education program encompassed the development of a range of capabilities, including: project management, design of data collection instruments, research ethics principles and procedures, rigorous data analysis methods, data management skills, report writing, and public dissemination. The activities involved in this Project led to the establishment of effective communication channels among the team members. In particular, the Project contributed to the trialling and development of inter-university videoconference seminars that continue to enable the sharing of relevant research literature, research methods and progressive data analysis.

Summary

After initial data collection and analysis, the selection criteria for the development of particular dimensions of the case were recalibrated. In a more nuanced manner, they engaged the significant issues emerging and subsequent key findings relative to the research questions. Embedded throughout the evidentiary chapters that follow are five cases that illustrate both individually and collectively the dimensions of this case on the work of:

1. Leaders changing school culture.
   • Case 1: Repositioning Year 10
   • Case 2: A principal’s report.
2. Leaders building capacity.
   • Case 3: An industry-schools partnership
   • Case 4: Partnerships with young people at risk
   • Case 5: A regional response to transition pathways.

Findings in relation to this leadership work are now presented in the chapters that follow.
Chapter 4—Leaders changing school culture: curriculum renewal and cultural change

Joint statement:
‘Queensland’s education system has undergone an exciting transformation in the past decade, including our ground-breaking ‘learning-or-earning’ reforms […] We will also introduce […] Junior, with its own distinct identity, for Years 8 and 9 in state schools and add Year 7 in 2015.’ (p.) (Bligh & Dick, 2011)

For the past fifty years in Australia, senior secondary schooling was the domain of teachers preparing small groups of students to transition into university or colleges of advanced education. Since 2002, a series of Queensland Government commissioned reviews and legislation have initiated a reform of senior secondary schooling. These initiatives encompass the formation of partnerships at the school community level as well as regional, state and national levels. This agenda is driven through processes evident in DET’s Strategic Plan 2010-2014 (Queensland DET, 2010c). Now the purpose of senior secondary schooling is to ‘lay strong education foundations’ and ‘develop skills for the economy’ (Queensland DET, 2010c) (see Table 4).

Table 4: Objectives of senior secondary schooling in Queensland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Every young Queenslander will be prepared with the educational foundations to support successful transitions to further education, training and work, through:</th>
<th>2. Queenslanders will be skilled to maximise their opportunities and productively contribute to Queensland’s economy, through:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• seamless transitions</td>
<td>• youth transitions and attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• school and student performance</td>
<td>• participation and improved outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• positive schools and students</td>
<td>• TAFE capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• quality teaching and learning</td>
<td>• quality standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• parent and community partnerships.</td>
<td>• industry partnerships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Queensland Government DET, 2010c

In Queensland, leaders are officially working to improve youth attainment and transition outcomes by working with students to make plans for their education, training and work futures at Year 10, when they are notionally 15 years of age. Alternative provisions are made for students who have chronic or acute disabilities, impairments and/or handicaps. Queensland created Year 10 as an explicit and integral year in students’ pathways transition. Using a SET Plan process, schools seek to support students in making appropriate choices linked to their career trajectories, which may be aligned to Australia’s changing economy (Access Economics, 2009). Schools use a range of strategies to do this. Prior to Year 10, secondary schooling is general and broad. However, from Year 10 on, education leaders work with students to enable them to make informed choices regarding their future education,
training and work. The cases throughout this Report all focus on actions designed to close the gap in youth attainment and transition and achieve the successful completion of Year 12.

At national and state levels, the education system mandated that schools be held accountable to the public by making a range of school results and participation data available so all can access and understand it. This too is driving educational leaders to change school culture because they are no longer just publicly accountable for one pathway arising from senior secondary schooling; namely, the academic pathway to university.

The drivers of changes with which educational leaders are grappling are complex and multi-directional. They were not just driven ‘from the top’ by state or national level authorities. In some instances, many of these changes were already underway at school and community level, and policy makers both responded to the pressure for such changes and appropriated innovative elements for incorporation into their systemic reform agenda.

4.1 Capabilities of leaders

Key issues interviewees identified as important for educational leaders are:

- making information publicly available
- differentiating curriculum
- changing mindsets (their own and others).

From our analysis of the 72 interview transcripts, we identified a range of capabilities of Queensland educational leaders who are working to close the gap in youth attainment and transition. These capabilities were then examined further through an analysis of the 29 responses to the questionnaire. We calculated the averages (mean) for those who strongly agree (SA), agree (A) and tend to agree (TA). They are presented below in order of the significance attributed to them by the respondents.

Leaders who work with young people (n=29):

(28 out of 29 responses SA/A/TA)
- develop multi-level partnerships
- work with multi-agency partnerships
- know the guidelines within which they must work.

(27 out of 29 responses SA/A/TA)
- imagine ways of doing things differently
- build respect for people and their work
- collaborate with others
- inspire
- recognise different time frames for learning
- are aware of their duty of care.
(26 out of 29 responses SA/A/TA)

- instil confidence
- communicate
- build strategic alliances.

(25 out of 29 responses SA/A/TA)

- know parameters and how to manipulate them
- listen to young people
- lead by example
- capitalise on opportunities as they occur
- are accountable for outcomes
- see space and places for learning differently.

As the following analysis shows, these capabilities resonate across the three key issues interviewees identified as important for educational leaders; namely, making information publicly available, differentiating curriculum, and changing mindsets. They also link to the educational, personal, relational, intellectual and organisational leadership capabilities, which DETA identifies as the core of outstanding leadership of Queensland state schools (Queensland DETA, 2006; see also Chapter 1).

### 4.1.1 Making information publicly available

The Queensland Government has pursued a policy agenda to make a range of school information more accessible to the public, including student outcomes data. This public policy is evident in four areas. First, in accordance with government policy, school leadership teams ensure their websites publish a range of information including school annual reports. Second, the government publishes Year 12 senior secondary schooling outcomes on the QSA website; this information is then published in varying forms in the *Courier Mail* and all major regional newspapers in May or June every year. Third, each year the Queensland Government undertakes a post-school destination survey (Next Step) with Year 12 graduates from government and non-government schools between March and May in the year after completion of Year 12. Since 2005, the Next Step survey results have been published in a state-wide report and ten regional reports in August each year, all of which are publicly available from the Queensland DET website. In addition, there is public information about nation-wide attainment and transition of young people across Australia, including Queensland available through NCVER.

Publication of student outcomes for each school in the state commenced in 2005. From 2007 to 2008 there was a change to reporting categories. The change deleted the confusing OP-eligibility, with or without VET qualifications, as well as the VET competencies and full qualifications. From 2009, Year 12 outcomes on a per school basis were reported according to percentage attainments of: a Senior Statement; an OP for tertiary entrance; one of more VET qualifications; the AQF level of those qualifications (i.e., Certificate I, II, III, IV); School Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (SAT); QCE; and nil (i.e., those who do not attain any qualification or statement). This categorization does not include those young people who attain the QCIA or those on visas as international students.
The public availability of these data sets has meant that school leaders are more aware of the picture painted of their schools in the public arena by this information, and its range of possible consequences. A key focus for public comment relates to OP scores. However, school leaders are also conscious of data relating to the percentage of students who exit with no qualifications and the apparent high level of students commencing but not completing VET qualifications. Cultural change in schools has been fostered through educational leaders having to engage with this public accountability agenda.

The simplification of data representations from 2007-2008 to 2011 has on the one hand had a positive consequence because VET certificate completions are now clearly identified. Newspapers report these data. On the other hand, there is no easy comparability even among VET Certificates at the same level because they are not considered to be ‘equal’ in value in workplaces. For instance, there is a different value attributed to a Certificate I in Information Technology where the projected employment and economic importance is small relative to a Certificate I in Construction where the projected economic importance and demand for workers is higher (Access Economics, 2009).

Another issue relates to the nature of these data and the public’s capacity to interpret them; for example, the use of percentages attaining outcomes versus the numbers actually achieving the same outcomes can mislead. People may be swayed by the percentages when in fact low numbers of students at a particular school are actually doing an OP-academic track pathway.

Technological advances have meant that all school, college, academy website information is available for all who can access it. Reputations of educational leaders and their organisations are at stake with the publication of such data. Leaders have had to develop capabilities for crafting what is made publicly available and make or influence decisions about this. This is as much a story for analysis as the data themselves.

4.2 Differentiating curriculum, time, spaces and places

Evidence concerning educational leaders’ capabilities for changing school culture is signalled through establishing differentiated curricula through curriculum renewal processes. These initiatives in turn require new capabilities with regard to the senior secondary schooling timetable, reconfigurations of learning spaces (within schools) and alternative places for learning (outside schools).

4.2.1 Curriculum

Leadership strategies for curriculum differentiation include the creation of a range of learning pathways in senior secondary schooling. ‘They realise they’ve got to offer different programs and that just not one form of education suits all young people’ (Regional Coordinator).

At the school level, there is collaboration among education and training leaders both within school and outside school. This is essential to provide a differentiated curriculum that comprises new subjects and appropriate pedagogical approaches for the diversity of learning needs presented by young people. ‘It was only when ETRF came along you suddenly realised that you can’t do this on
your own … so we do it collectively’ (Director). Collaboration involves staff at all levels working cross-sectorally and with a range of providers. ‘Principals have realised that they need lots of other providers to be involved in their school’ (Regional Coordinator).

These leaders have become increasingly sophisticated in the development of both academic and vocational courses which combine a number of qualifications. Students can receive higher level vocational education qualifications, but it also maximises the points that a course contributes to a student’s QCE. Astute educational leaders recognise that young adults need the experience of the different forms of assessment linked to academic and vocational pathways. Exposure is provided through curriculum that has academic graded criteria and/or competency based non-graded assessment criteria. These school leaders are providing these experiences as part of the Year 10 transitional learning package. In some instances Year 7 and 8 experiences now include enterprise education or project-based learning that provides for work-oriented learning responsibilities and expectations.

Through these carefully crafted curriculum pathways leaders now signal a different message about the purpose of senior secondary schooling. Indeed, the language of even academic pathways has shifted to focus on a senior secondary schooling for later in life—as a lawyer, accountant, microbiologist, carpenter, motor mechanic, sheet metal worker or other profession. The specialist academies established by the Queensland Government and industry TTCs (funded nationally but located in secondary schools) are evidence that in this process, senior secondary schooling is repositioned as providing learning experiences for education and training pathways into the world of work.

The senior secondary schooling curriculum is differentiated in two ways. First, there is a choice differentiation of curriculum pathways (i.e., academic, vocational or mixture of both). Second, each pathway must cater for the range of students that a school has at any one period. This is a pedagogical issue, not just a curriculum choice issue. Educational leaders now work to develop pedagogical frameworks that cater for students’ specific learning needs and embed them within the available pathways. This is reflected in the nomenclature of middle management in some schools where, in order to publicly signal their pedagogical intent and the focus of their curriculum pathways, a Head of Department-Senior Secondary Schooling has been appointed. In senior secondary schooling, such leaders are needed to manage curriculum pathways and pedagogical frameworks to meet the learning needs among varied student cohorts. The aggregation of the different types of learning needs and pathways distilled from the data include:

- students who need extensive scaffolding for a wide range of singular or interrelated reasons
- students with special abilities suited for Certificate I and II type vocational training activities
- students who are highly academically capable but who do not see university as their first port of call after Year 12, who may be motivated by a wide range of other opportunities immediately post-school, yet know that they have the ability and capacity to take further tertiary pathways if and/or when they choose to do so
- students who aim for a university entry pathway
- students who aim for a trade training pathway.
The complexity presented by these categories of students challenge the capabilities of educational leaders. There are; however, always students for whom the curriculum pathways and pedagogical support reaches an order of super-complexity, for whom flexible learning provisions are made. It is in relation to these complexities that education leaders undertake curriculum renewal and construct timetables for senior secondary schooling, as well as alternative spaces and places for learning.

4.2.2 Time

Time is been greatly impacted by the changes in the culture of senior secondary schooling in Queensland. These changes mean that educational leaders have had to develop new capabilities for school timetabling. In many respects, the school timetable is a manifestation of the reforms to senior secondary schooling (Innes, 2007). The timetable tells us much about how educational leaders are making the reforms to senior secondary schooling work—and workout. Because the timetable directs the work of teachers, students and associated staff, it reveals whether participants value and see the reforms as valuable (Baker, 1994). Changes in the timetable in senior secondary schooling mediate and mitigate the drive for systemic change. Through their concerted actions that support broader long-term reforms in senior secondary schooling, leaders moved their schools to flexible timetabling, although the practice appears to have been inconsistent. For example:

_In the past we’d have to apply for variation to school hours … if you’d asked me that 10 years ago I would have said I never dreamed of it. EQ would never have accepted it_ (Principal).

A number of secondary schools are offering a four-day school week, or the equivalent with flexible contact hours for Years 11 and 12. Sometimes flexible timetabling is used for vocational placements in workplaces, for example in child care centres, hospitality, trades. In other instances, students do extension work, complete assignments, or access specialist teachers, laboratories and workshops using flexible timetabling. In many instances flexible start and finish times are reported: ‘It’s 7.30 in the morning you would’ve found five or six classes operating’ (Principal). Block timetabling for VETiS is arranged to ‘keep the spares to a minimum’ (Principal). However, as might be expected, flexible timetabling does not suit all schools or all students.

Even with flexible timetabling accommodating early and late starts to provide for learning integrated commitments, leaders have to contend with a myriad of competing interests and issues concerning staffing, resourcing, and duty of care. The press for arrangements to be made for students out-of-regular hours means that some schools cannot provide the flexibility that many young people desire. In addition, learning provision is more than an issue of time. Issues concerning timetabling are implicated in the curriculum pathways and pedagogical frameworks employed in its delivery.

Time remains a challenge. The flexible uses of time are dependent on teachers and school management teams as they engage in the ‘give and take’ arrangements to build their own capabilities as part of the work of improving the educational engagement and increasing the attainment of young people, and improving their transition to post-school education, training and employment. Furthermore, every time there is a staff change, those curriculum, pedagogical and timetable
arrangements have to be renegotiated through processes of orientation and induction. While industrial conditions allow for flexible timetabling, this enculturation cannot be mandated. Staff, parent and students orientation and induction is where broader long-term reforms in senior secondary schooling are renegotiated with changes in the school communities’ demographics, and over time as new generations of reform impact on school changes. The creative uses of time for different pathways are always under pressure from competing agendas and are often contested, not once, but over and over. This is a key leadership issue, especially for senior secondary schooling leaders who have to manage staff through ongoing, broad-based long-term reforms. Even so, the factors contributing to this situation are much more complex than time, as issues of spaces and places are connected with leaders’ efforts to differentiate the curriculum.

4.2.3 Spaces and places

While space for learning must be made in a temporal sense, space must also be made in a physical sense. The reforms to senior secondary schooling that leaders have developed for closing the gap in youth attainment and transition pathways require a range of diverse types of teaching and learning environments. Some of these spaces are provided in schools while other spaces are available in community organisations, colleges, universities and workplaces.

Funded by the Australian Government, TTCs are establishing new spaces for industry-focused trade-specific training that are shared among clusters of schools and supported by local industry. State Government funding has provided for transformation of existing secondary school spaces such as the redevelopment of Hendra State High School to Aviation High (close to the Brisbane airport) and Toowong State High School into the Queensland Academy of Science, Mathematics and Technology (QASMT) (close to the University of Queensland). In the instance of Stanthorpe State High School, the Queensland College of Wine Tourism (QCWT) was housed in a new building opposite the high school precinct. Similarly; two of the new academies were designed specifically for their respective industry’s tertiary education alignments, e.g., the Queensland College of Creative Industries was co-located within the Queensland University of Technology grounds at Kelvin Grove in Brisbane; while the Queensland College of Health Science was co-located with Griffith University’s Gold Coast campus.

As new spaces are opened up the place or geographical locations for learning are also considered as can be seen in the co-locations of these specialized academies. Where co-location is not possible, transport is required if students are to access alternative places for learning outside the school. When timetabling flexibly, transportation is considered explicitly. Some schools collaborate with other agencies or TAFE Institutes to use local facilities. ‘We’re trying to overcome issues of transport by having lots of things that can be done locally … so there are agencies talking now’ (Executive Director Schools). Others buy their own transport. ‘We are actually getting a bus for the simple reason we think this will facilitate movement of staff and students into the community’ (Principal).

Education leaders have changed the culture of senior secondary schooling. They have developed capabilities for producing, enacting and authorising differentiated curricula, flexible timetabling, and alternative spaces and places for learning. These capabilities for making such strategic changes are
Leaders Closing the Gap in Youth Attainment and Transitions

expected to deliver improvements in youth attainment and transitions. Perhaps one of the more important capabilities leaders need to change is the mindset of the many interests with whom they now have to engage in the work and workability of senior secondary schooling.

4.3 Changing mindsets

Schools have an expectation that their students will succeed and that their results will improve. However, Queensland’s reforms to senior secondary schooling have required its education and training leaders to change their own mindsets and those of others. A range of factors has contributed to this. These include increased public accountability and pressure on state governments from a serial coalition of Australian governments, which have linked funding to improvement in youth attainment and transition. The setting of targets for key areas of school performance has monitored these changes.

Increasingly, the Queensland education system’s agenda for public accountability has coincided with requirements on schools to meet targets set for Year 12 outcomes for all students. To do this schools have to generate performance plans to achieve those targets; this includes individual student SET Plans. DET has escalated expectations of targets for teachers and principals. Examples of the strategies for doing so include teaching and learning audits; performance planning processes for teachers as well as school executives; and four year contracts with additional pay for principals in designated low SES schools.

DET invests considerable resources into its own data collection and analysis. These data are presented to schools in a range of forums and principals are aware of the expectations of DET through its target setting processes. The state has negotiated targets under NP YAT with the Australian Government. At the regional level principals are informed of both the current status of their retention and attainment data and the expectation that they will provide the leadership in their schools to meet the projected targets.

The current focus on publicly available data poses dilemmas for leaders. It is possible to improve results as determined by the publication of Year 12 outcomes without advantaging all students and increasing their expectations of success. However, the focus in senior secondary schooling has moved from students’ participation in learning to accountability for those students making the expected level of attainment and securing the expected transitions in moving their lives forward. The emphasis is on learning and achievement of the results that demonstrate learning. Educational leaders are now expected to improve retention from Year 10 through to the completion of Year 12; to improve students’ intellectual engagement with learning; to improve students’ attainment of a Year 12 qualification; and to improve students’ transition to further education, training and/or work.

This systemic strategy is impacting directly on, and being made to have an impact by educational leaders as they work with every student in their senior secondary years. Here we get a sense of what ‘broader long-term reforms in senior secondary schooling’ means. In effect, it means that the state is still seeking to implement social policy and legislative measures it enacted at the turn of the century for the education and training reform to close the gap in youth attainment and transition for all
Queensland students. Such accountability mechanisms are now asking finer grained questions about the benefits to the supposed beneficiaries of these social policies, i.e., young people’s attainment and transitions into further education, vocational training and/or meaningful work post-school. The policy response is reflective of Australia’s systematisation of national funding to all public and private education providers, through both direct and indirect means.

The impacts of these broader long-term reforms in senior secondary schooling include more visible accountability for schools and changed expectations for Year 12 outcomes. As noted, both academic and VET results are now in the public domain through Departmental Annual Reports, the QSA and school websites, and in newspapers. This has increased the expectation that leaders will finds way for students to achieve certification. No longer is it a matter of them just attending school to the end of Year 12. It is now expected that education leaders will work to ensuring Year 12 results provide young people with pathways to further learning. In senior secondary schooling, ‘The culture has changed for students … to a culture of intellectual engagement … in achievement rather than just participation’ (Principal). Excellence—intellectual quality—can be recognized in all areas.

_The culture has always been around academic excellence and sporting excellence ... and cultural excellence. Vocational excellence was never on the agenda—it was curriculum for the dummies ... [but it has] helped us to transition a lot of kids very successfully_ (Principal).

While the public accountability regime, the curriculum and the mindset of the people concerned with senior secondary schooling has changed, schools commitment to excellence—to intellectual quality—has not diminished. The pressure is on to increase expectations and results in this regard.

_I guess one thing probably hasn’t changed, for the majority of schools they want every young person who enrolls at their school to succeed, to be a success and to achieve what they want to achieve_ (Regional Reform Coordinator).

Within VET pathways there is an increasing expectation that Certificate I and II are no longer sufficient. Schools are being expected to provide programs that enable students to undertake Certificate III qualifications, and to mix QSA subjects with vocational qualifications. As the following evidentiary excerpts indicate, there has been a change of mindsets for those both outside and inside schools.

**Mindsets of industry people**

For some industry leaders, their mindsets about learning in senior secondary schooling have changed.

_In fact some of its [mindset] has been a dramatic turn around. These are industries that don’t [didn’t] take school-based apprenticeships, because of the safety. But [now] they immediately get people who are, they feel, are safe in the work place_ (Regional Coordinator).

_We’ve now got people in industry understanding that our labour pool can be here, they don’t have to go searching to China, or Chile, or America_ (Executive Director).
For some principals, the local community reflects and expresses positive changes in the school culture.

The biggest positive change would be the reaction from the community in how our school’s being perceived. So it had a fairly negative perception ... It was looked at as being a bit of a sink hole, over the past ... but it’s nice to be regarded as doing something a big innovative (Principal).

The mindsets of some leaders have shifted to encompass both academic and vocational pathways as integral to senior secondary schooling. In some case this has occurred to the extent that one DET official was able to state, without equivocation:

Every student is a vocational student. I don’t care if they’re doing Ancient History or Physics […] once you open up their eyes around them to what there is actually is, and the possibilities it can hold for them, it changes— it’s a change of a mindset (Regional Coordinator).

**Mindsets of educational leaders**

Year 10’s repositioning within senior secondary schooling, the development of the QCE, and the banking credits towards qualifications have all impacted on the mindsets of educational leaders. The development of differentiated curricula to enable young people to transition from the general education of junior secondary to alternative, accredited curriculum pathways is also impacting on the mindsets of educational leaders. They have had to re-envision what now constitutes senior secondary schooling.

The mindsets of teachers are being impacted by the accumulation of public accountabilities. Teachers are now positioned as educational leaders with responsibilities as mentors or coaches for each student, working to realise their learning potential. Positioning teachers as co-leaders of the broader long-term reforms in senior secondary schooling may mean they are not necessarily victims of these changes. Those closest to the students in senior secondary schooling are the main vehicle for implementing and constituting these reforms. In a system engaging in broad-based long-term structural reforms in senior secondary schooling, teachers are among ‘the most significant change agents in these reforms’ (Villegas-Reimers, 2003, p. 7). Teachers play a dual role in these broad-based long-term structural reforms in senior secondary schooling, being positioned as intellectual agents to make the changes, and also positioned as objects whose capabilities have to be changed. This makes the issue of teacher professional learning, at both pre-service and in-service levels a challenge. Working within varying enablers and constraints, teachers make a difference. ‘We’re seeing a real change in the students. I feel I’m making a difference […] it is huge, it's a very, very big cultural shift’ (Principal). Clearly some teachers value vocational programs.

[Teachers are] valuing that it’s okay for kids to come to school three days a week, especially if they’re ‘at risk’. It’s okay to keep them in schools ... we just don’t toss them out and have nothing to do with them. That’s the change in culture and it’s been slow. There’s still some teachers who don’t see any value in vocational education, but a lot of them have changed (Principal).
Teachers are also impacted by the public availability of information, especially that relating to the Year 9 NAPLAN results and Year 12 outcomes results. The differentiated curriculum becomes public through the requirements relating to the attainment of VET qualifications. Teachers have to develop the capabilities to deal with new subject matter, new times, new spaces, new technologies, and the system’s general and specific accountability mechanisms for youth attainment and transition.

The mindsets of leaders operating at the level of middle managers are also impacted by these broad-based long-term structural reforms in senior secondary schooling. They are implicated directly in the design of curriculum pathways, including academic and vocational assessment, and requirements to ensure staff engage in relevant professional learning. Principals’ mindsets are shifting as they develop their capabilities to deal with the public perceptions arising from the publication of information, and the need for increasing sophistication in data analysis. In addition, they are required to provide strategic oversight of curriculum pathways, pedagogical frameworks, together with planning for learning spaces and places and consequential resource implications in the medium to long-term.

**Case 1: Repositioning Year 10**

This is a story of leaders in two very different schools who have developed distinctive Year 10 programs as part of a whole-school curriculum renewal process. The QCE framework and the SET planning processes create a Year 10 curriculum that, while different in each school, provides transition into Years 11 and 12.

School A is a suburban school with a large senior cohort and well-established vocational program. School B is an inner urban P-12 school with a small senior cohort. Data from the Next Steps report of the 2009 cohort destinations, school annual reports, and the My School website have been collected and analysed. Findings have then been verified with leaders from both schools.

**Similarities**

The SET planning process is undertaken as a separate course within the Year 10 program. At School A, SET planning occurs during Access lessons (1 per week). At School B, students undertake SET planning through the Everest (1 lesson per week) and K2 (2 lessons per week) courses. These courses include: service learning and community engagement, study skills, personal growth and development, drug education, academic monitoring, goal setting and career planning; plus, Certificate II Work Education, work experience, life skills, social skills and tutoring programs.

1. Student progress in monitored closely.
At School A, students do not proceed with the new term’s program until all assessment from the previous term has been completed. The school has systems for tracking assessment completion and ensuring that students catch-up and undertake incomplete work. School B’s Year 10 students set specific targets for their learning each term that are negotiated with their teachers and communicated to their parents. At the end of each term each student
reviews the targets with a teacher and plans for the next term.
2. Students are provided with experience of the different forms of assessment linked to both pathways— academic and vocational.
School A provides exposure to competency-based assessment for the vocational curriculum pathway because the school leaders had identified that students needed to experience the differences in assessment techniques and philosophy so as to make informed choices for academic and/or vocational pathways. At School B all students participate in Enterprise Learning.
3. Year 10 curriculum repositioning has been used to build staff and community capacity for changing mindsets.
Senior and middle managers at School A have participated in a five-year capacity building program, which continues. Senior and middle managers at School B are largely new appointees who have taken on a unique P-12 curriculum model that is matched with a professional learning program for teachers that is tailored to individual circumstances.
4. Impacts of external events, including but not limited to state and national reform agenda, were used to effect organisational change.
At School A, these changes are part of a total review of curriculum and pedagogy that was stimulated by the school undertaking a Council of International Schools review in October 2006. Consequently, the school has developed middle schooling and senior secondary schooling curriculum frameworks and adopted Dimensions of Learning as a pedagogical framework. School B had experienced a Review by Exception. The new principal was given an action plan arising from the review and a brief to change the culture and outcomes of the school. Consequently, a total revision of the Preparatory to Year 12 curriculum was undertaken. This culminated in a school-specific framework integrated with staff professional development program.

Differences

Student choice
The major difference between these Year 10 programs relates to student choice. School A’s students have a range of choices similar to many other Year 10 programs across the state. School B’s students have no choice. The Year 10 program consists of Strands A and B. Subject selection for Year 10 is dependent on student performance in Year 9 subjects, associated with demonstrated learning commitment and appropriate behaviour. Students are placed in a Strand according to their academic performance at the end of Year 9, or by teacher recommendation. Following successful completion of subjects in Semester 1, students may be offered access to TAFE courses in Semester 2. Students in Strand B have fewer choices than those in Strand A. The decision to limit choice was based on trying to ensure success in the senior phase of schooling, especially the literacy and numeracy standards necessary for a QCE.
Emerging issues for leadership

Deep knowledge and understanding of individuals within the student cohort, their families and the local community are considered by leaders when positioning or repositioning Year 10 within senior secondary schooling. The factors of school size and time available for change implementation are implicated in the decisions made by these leaders. Past experiences with VETiS have provided a basis for informed decisions as to what works for students, staff, community and local industry/business. Year 10 has been created as an explicit transition pathway in students’ educational journeys. The QCE and its SET planning process have been used as levers for changes consistent with educational vision of leaders in each school.

4.4 Challenges to curriculum renewal

Challenges remain despite knowledge of effective strategies for increased school completion rates: supportive school culture, school-wide strategies, and student-focused strategies addressing the needs of specific groups of students (Lamb & Rice, 2008). The impact of the Australian national curriculum, if it is implemented as currently proposed, may reduce the capacity of schools to offer the current range of transitional opportunities to students, particularly in Year 10. Consultations on draft curricula for the senior years are ongoing in 2011 and beyond until all curriculum areas P-12 have national documents (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011). The pressure on secondary schooling to encompass a mandated national curriculum as well as nationally endorsed VET certificate level competencies may well prove too much for school communities.

Resourcing curriculum such as VET from within schools has always been a challenge. Recruiting and retaining qualified staff, sourcing and funding the maintenance of plant and equipment to industry standards have been ongoing challenges. In recent times, Federal funding for the TTCs has provided short term opportunities for some school clusters. However, such funding is one-off and was not accompanied by systemic funding of complementary large-scale medium to long-term multi-skilling of current teaching cohorts and teacher education programs transitioning tradespersons into the teaching profession.

The State Government that introduced Year 10 as the transition to Years 11 and 12 is also a signatory to the development and implementation of a national curriculum and pathways transition commitments post-Year 12. The impact of this on curriculum flexibility in Year 10 and Years 11 and 12 offerings is unknown. If this approach is extended to all Key Learning Areas proposed under the national curriculum; then the capacity to offer what educators consider to be valuable approaches to the transition continuum (Year 10 to post-Year 12) may be eroded.

So the dual pressures of unknown inflexible national secondary curriculum and the already known AQTF requirements for VET delivery are impact factors on the capacity to offer a broad range of curriculum offerings. In this case, providing pathways in partnership with other providers becomes even more crucial if an individualised senior secondary schooling through SET planning processes is to be available to all young people.
Case 2: A principal’s report—senior schooling so far
Reproduced with the principal’s permission; all identifying information has been anonymised for confidentiality.

When students enter the senior phase of learning, we endeavour to encourage them to find their pathway; the journey they will take through study and work. [X] State High School students in 2011 have certainly taken advantage of the many varied opportunities available to them.

One way to combine work and study is to sign up for a SAT. SATs are available across a wide range of industries including Retail, Hospitality, Business Administration and Construction Trades. This year we have seen a 25% increase in the number of students in Years 10, 11 and 12 taking on a SAT with around 60 students signed up at the time of writing this Report. These students work in paid employment typically one day per week as well as completing theory work to attain a nationally recognised qualification in their chosen industry whilst maintaining their school work. In many cases, these students will continue in this work when they have completed Year 12 or go on to study a higher qualification in a related field. SATs offer fantastic rewards and incentives for both students and employers and it is encouraging to see so many of our students taking advantage of this pathway.

Partnerships with Schools is an initiative with [Y] Institute of TAFE which allows students to study a Certificate II or III whilst still continuing their senior studies. In 2011, [2 students] have been studying photography and graphics respectively. The growing popularity of this program is reflected in the fact that we have had an unprecedented rise in the number of students applying for a vast array of programs for the 2012 school year—25 to be exact! Students will be studying a wide-range of subjects including Hairdressing, Animation, Photography and Visual Arts.

Similarly, [Z] Institute of TAFE offers students the opportunity to study towards a Diploma program during their senior years of schooling. In 2011, two of our students […] are on track for success in this program in the areas of events and fitness. Next year will see three of our students engaged in Diploma programs.

[A specialist TAFE] offers a program for students to study pre-apprenticeship programs during Years 11 and 12 and this year, two of our students […] have taken up this opportunity to ‘get ahead of the pack’ by attaining these qualifications and adding real value to their resumes. I am delighted to announce that in 2012 participation rates have soared and we will have 15 students involved in this program.

Students in Year 12 have the opportunity to participate in a number of early entry to university programs offered by […] universities. Five of our students […] have successfully completed undergraduate subjects from a variety of courses. This is a challenging but ultimately rewarding opportunity for high-achieving students who want to study at university post-year 12.

Another way for students to identify their chosen pathway is to participate in work experience.
We have seen the number of students participating in work experience rise from 13 in 2010 to 76 this year. Thanks must go to [A] from [B] Workplace Training Group who coordinates student placements, working from the senior secondary schooling office on Thursdays. Many students have benefitted from the exposure to a variety of work environments throughout the year.

The Courses and Careers Expo held in June at the Community Hall and hosted by [this] State High School saw over 30 exhibitors come together from universities, TAFE, GTOs and employer groups to advise students from throughout the [district] about work and study options. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from all participants and will ensure this becomes an annual event.

Also, in June, Year 11 students participated in the RYDA program. RYDA, a not-for-profit company, is an organisation that has developed a road safety education program delivered to the youth of our community through Rotary Clubs. The program is directed towards our young people about road safety as they approach the period in their life when they start driving a car and ride as a passenger in a car driven by one of their peers. This is an invaluable program and I thoroughly recommend it to next year’s Year 11 students.

It is always rewarding to reflect on a busy year and contemplate our achievements. Students studying VET subjects continue to receive outstanding completion rates, attaining meaningful, nationally recognised qualifications. Academically, students are achieving remarkable results in a range of settings in the senior school.

Emerging issues for leadership

One of the most pressing challenges still comes from including VETiS in the senior secondary schooling curriculum. Since the mid-1990s in particular, schools have been trying to come to grips with the staffing and resourcing issues of a national VET agenda and its training framework (AQTF) that was never designed explicitly for operating within a secondary school curriculum framework. The national VET agenda is tightly focused on workplace competencies, facilities and skilled industry-recognised teachers. The state secondary system is not equipped to provide any of these naturally.

Staffed and physically resourced to deliver a general and broad education to Year 9, and academic subjects to groups of up to 25 in senior secondary schooling, leadership in secondary schools is challenged to deliver a differentiated education to Year 12 with VET requirements of industry—standard equipment and teachers and classes with maximums of 14. Leaders have been creative and resourceful. They have accessed one-off grants to acquire equipment; supported teachers to gain industry experience and keep it current; and, explored vocational qualifications, which are the least resource intensive and school-friendly regardless of industry needs. They have worked assiduously to develop community and industry contacts to establish and maintain out of school opportunities for their students. Districts/regions similarly exercised leadership in using whatever resources were available to support schools to cooperate and share with external groups.
If the inclusion of VET to the senior curriculum was the panacea for all that ails the education of adolescents; then, the combination of vocational courses and academic subjects developed over the last fifteen year could reasonably be expected to have made appreciable difference to their transitions and attainments.

**Summary**

Education leaders have reshaped the culture of senior secondary schooling, through:
- developing and/or enhancing capabilities to build capacity among staff and students,
- working with publicly available information about students’ learning outcomes, differentiating curriculum, and changing their own and others’ mindsets.

Their capability to work with the publicly accountability agenda of state and Australian governments is especially important for knowing the guidelines within which the work of senior secondary schooling must be undertaken. Over time, leaders operating at the school level have devised strategies to engage with the publication of Year 12 outcomes from both academic and vocational pathways.

One strategy has been to differentiate the curriculum from general to dual pathways. This has been achieved through the SET planning process and the registration of SET Plans with the QSA. The repositioning of Year 10 as a transition year has been illustrated through the scenario of two very different schools, albeit with a similar purpose. Cotermous with this strategy is that of changing the mindsets of their own and others’ views of senior secondary schooling, which is illustrated in the second case study. With university-aligned learning only one among a number of legitimate pathways to achieve a senior certificate (i.e., in this instance the QCE), the notion of vocational excellence is now legitimised.

The ETRF (2002) agenda established this senior phase of learning encompassing Years 10, 11 and 12. Through policy, legislation and funding a RYPS, administered by the QSA, Year 10 was repositioned as the transition to senior secondary schooling Years 11 and 12 (Harreveld & Singh, 2007). The instigation of the SET planning process in Year 10 was by itself a major change strategy. It was this that compelled schools to reconsider how they were advising students, what information they were actually providing students, and whether the usual pathways were actually suitable for that individual or group. Eventually, the SET planning process challenged mindsets of students and their parents, education and training providers, workplace employers, agencies and community organisations to view senior secondary schooling differently.

Capabilities of leaders are evident in the learning pathways that have been devised for:

- entry into senior secondary schooling (SET planning in Year 10)
- progression through senior secondary schooling (Years 11 and 12 academic, vocational differentiated curriculum)
- attainment of worthwhile outcomes from senior secondary schooling (QCE, further education, training and/or work transitions).
Partnerships are integral to making these complex learning pathways work. The following chapter reports on the nature and sustainability of partnerships in senior secondary schooling.
Chapter 5—Leaders building capacity: people, partnerships and pathways

Partnerships are being mobilised by Queensland’s education and training leaders at all levels to build capacity for individual schools, clusters and systems to deliver the reform of senior secondary schooling. Leaders at regional/district and school levels are collaborating to make the Year 10 transition year and the choices they make for Years 11 and 12 work as well as possible for the young people for whom they have a duty of care.

Across the state’s school communities, leaders of education, training and social welfare organisations work creatively among agencies and sectors, within funding parameters, to provide career counselling and learning opportunities for all students. So-called ‘alternative learning pathways’ are developed for some young people as they move towards learning.

5.1 Leading people

To sustain the reform agenda’s needed for building new leadership capabilities, leaders are working to build capacity at all levels of Queensland’s education and training system. They negotiate with those inside and outside of school to access varied learning pathways for students through Years 11 and 12 into further education, training and/or work. One key strategy was the creation of new leadership roles and services to undertake the work of delivering a wider range of services for young people enrolled at a secondary school (discussed below). The other key strategy involved creating partnerships through committees and meetings. Leaders are now required to have skills to establish and maintain relationships with individuals and among groups. These strategies led to changing demands on the leadership capabilities of all involved.

Formal and informal partnerships work because of, ‘The interactions between schools and local businesses, schools and the service community’ (Regional Coordinator). This is what makes formal and informal partnerships work. However, they have to be constantly renewed as leaders move on. This brings increased work for those leaders who have stayed and those who have come into a community because relationships have to be forged with new people. For example, as well as secondary school staff who may change, there are also new leaders in industries, support agencies, the Parents and Citizens’ Association, sporting clubs, and feeder schools. Every time there is a change in any of these leaders, new relationships have to be forged. In local communities, the school is still a constant and the community looks to the school for leadership. There are expectations that the school will be a learning hub for the community.

There is a perception of some negative impact on schools as the existing systems they had established prior to and during the time of the reform agenda implementation have been changed in recent times. In some instances, interviewees reported that the schools, and even the community organisations, lost good networks and connections that existed prior to the reforms. These networks and connections were giving students access to the job market. Leaders had to renegotiate these with the larger organisations that secured contracts via Australian Government pathways funding to service larger
geographical areas. However, in some instances leaders explained that there was a lack of understanding of the local microcosm of the education/training/work environment and its associated partnerships. Where the same people moved across to these new organisations, then there is some leadership continuity. However, when new people come into an area, relationships among leaders have had to be renegotiated. This is a key issue affecting the sustainability of school-industry partnerships.

Leaders have to be skilled in engaging in conversations. Advisory groups are used to bring leaders together: ‘Before reforms started, you would never have got that VET advisory group where they meet once a term and they are happy to share contacts and share initiatives’ (Regional Coordinator). Leaders from different systems and sectors are now talking with each other, whereas prior to this generation of reforms: ‘We didn’t have the talk between industry and the schools, but now we do’ (Principal). Inter-agency liaisons have been formed. For example: The [X] agency has now gone from ‘come to our agency and tell us what your latest program is [to] how best can we give a collective response to that’ (Regional Coordinator). Schools leaders once conversed as insiders, such that previously,

There was none of this collaborative business, it was only when reforms came along you suddenly realised that you can’t do this on your own. We don’t have the resources, the coordination, to do this on our own. So we do it collectively (Director).

Those involved in leading the reforms to senior secondary schooling include teachers in schools, along with a wider education labour force working directly with students. These include specialist staff for those with special needs, senior executives as well as regional education officers working across schools, often on a project-by-project basis, and funded according to the systemic priorities of the time.

Leaders are expected to establish commitment in others even when there is uncertainty about continuity. The precariousness of this change environment is not lost on these reform leaders.

The funding will cease by 2009 and we need processes in place for sustainability by the end of this year. We are not going to be able in this region to keep this thing going because depending on what the systemic priorities are there could be a massive focus, the next one I look at will be numeracy where there will be regional numeracy coordinators who will be organising direct resources to schools (Executive Director Schools).

Funding for senior secondary schooling initiatives is tagged according to state and national priorities. For education and training leaders this means that ‘sustainability’ of their partnerships will be a continuing issue. Governments have been known to engage in ‘reform after reform’ promising to meet the increasing and diverse needs of students (Lashaw, 2008, p. 110). To achieve sustainability through the capacity of leaders to carry forward the best ideas, relationships and practice from one government reform to the next is an issue of capacity building.
Leaders Closing the Gap in Youth Attainment and Transitions

This year is about the meaningful infrastructure, I don’t mean [just] for sustainability, but for capacity building [for the future]. We want to make sure that people don’t see this as a finite project (Executive Director Schools).

5.1.1 Leaders as transition brokers

During the formative stages of the agenda for reforming senior secondary schooling, district and regional leaders appointed education and training reform coordinators or project officers to new leadership roles. Now transition brokers work with students (individually or collectively), teachers and other school staff, community agencies, other education and training providers, and industry and business representatives. These leaders operate in a variety of modes, some working within one school, while other are shared across school clusters. Transition brokers work with young people in ways that complement the work of classroom-based teachers. Some of these teachers are leading the work in schools as heads of newly created departments. These departments are charged with senior secondary schooling, or VET, and/or transition pathways for vocational, academic and workplace learning. Some were traditional secondary teachers, while others were community youth workers or industry trainers from a range of work backgrounds who have been retrained. Nomenclature for these leadership positions varies, and depends on the position descriptions, funding sources and line management reporting processes. For example, in one school:

We fund out of school funds, a pathways officer, who works with our teachers for industry placements, works with our students around work placement … as well as our highly at-risk kids (Principal).

Transition brokers also work from community agencies, being funded under either State or Australian Government programs. The appointment of these transition brokers has been a successful strategy, filling a gap in the skill sets now required in the staffing arrangements for senior secondary schooling to develop and deliver the reform agenda on learning. These transition brokers have either been recruited from within staff or recruited from outside agencies, education and training providers. Those taking these positions have built the schools’ ownership along with the credibility for changes taking place with respect to learning, and pathways.

Transition brokerage services are offered through a number of state and national programs, both internal and external to schools. From 2010, the School Business Community Partnership Brokers program replaced the Career Advice Australia programs such as the Community Learning Partnerships and the Regional Industry Career Advisors. Career education services are offered to primary and secondary schools by in-school guidance and career counsellors, community workers, training organisations, and in one instance university student services staff conducted career development sessions on-site in a regional school.

Individual learning journeys are negotiated collaboratively during Year 10 and reported in the SET Plans. The transition brokers facilitate access to opportunities for learning identified in these plans. Thus, senior secondary schooling is a fulcrum for change that canny leaders use to build their staffing capacity and to acquire physical resources for young people’s learning opportunities. There is a recognition that, if young people are going to make wise choices, or have the capability to make a
choice; then schools need to have good knowledge about individual students. This means that education and training leaders need effective and efficient tracking systems, trustworthy knowledge about career options as it pertains to the major structural occurring across different industry sectors, and reliable information on pathways and high-end qualifications required for those careers (Access Economics, 2009).

Such transition brokerage services are embedded in work with young people and are provided by these leaders and other government and non-government agencies. The work of these leaders in schools has been directly impacted by, and they in turn have impacted on this work. Leaders have to manage all that is involved, in a context where representatives from different agencies have a say in management. As the following section indicates, partnerships of many varieties including school-industry and those with students are fundamental to enhancing the capabilities of leaders to establish effective post-school transitions.

5.2 Leading partnerships

School leaders forming partnerships with industry and other education and training providers is now a nationally significant factor in providing senior secondary schooling students access to learning opportunities. School-industry partnerships are now essential for delivery of Queensland’s senior secondary schooling curriculum, which has become increasingly complex as it has become more flexible to accommodate the needs of young people. School and industry leaders have to deal with new organisational and certification arrangements for Year 12 completion and post-school transitions.

Leaders see school-industry partnerships as facilitating teacher capacity building, while providing students with work integrated learning, career mentorship, accredited apprenticeship and traineeship programs, and access to technologies, plant and equipment. All of these are not funded through school-based resourcing models. School-industry partnerships enable education and training leaders to achieve productive relationships with young people, their families, communities, industry, schools and other education providers (Queensland DET, 2010c, p. 1).

Our analysis of transcripts identified a series of characteristics interviewees attributed to successful school-industry partnerships in senior secondary schooling. These attributes were then tested via the questionnaire. For each characteristic the mean of the responses on the Likert scale was calculated. In terms of the order of significance assigned to these characteristics by respondents, school-industry partnerships that work successfully require:

- accountability in governance
- adherence to quality assurance for risk management
- relationships management among school and work cultures
- contractual agreements which specify staffing roles and responsibilities.
Of the 29 survey respondents, 26 responses could be used to determine that:

• 4 out of 26 strongly agreed with overall survey partnership characteristics
• 10 out of 26 agreed with overall survey partnerships characteristics
• 9 out of 26 tended to agree about overall survey partnership characteristics
• 3 out of 26 were unsure about overall survey partnership characteristics.

These findings suggest that school partnerships rely heavily on leaders able to negotiate ‘complicated networks and webs of interconnected stakeholders’ (Harreveld & Singh, 2007, p. 7). Capabilities required for leadership in senior secondary schooling are increasingly complex. Collaborative leadership is needed to change the school culture from within. Leadership is also needed to establish and maintain school-industry partnerships with institutions, organisations and agencies.

5.2.1 Multifaceted school-industry partnerships

Leaders are creating partnerships at local schools, as well as State and Federal Government levels. They make partnerships with small, medium and big companies. Partnerships work across education and training systems and industry sectors. Partnerships are thus characterised as inter-systemic, trans-disciplinary and multi-level. Education and training leaders broker these school-industry partnerships to help all senior secondary schooling students. As one leader explained:

*When you look at the senior schooling agenda, it was a dual focus as far as I was concerned. One focus was about re-engaging with the disengaged, and the second was in creating opportunities through partnership with business and industry [to provide] vocational opportunities* (Director).

For leaders working with this tripartite focus at the education-training-work interface, they report that school-industry partnerships are both bridges and roadblocks. As bridges, they provide entrée to not only workplace skills and knowledge but also habits and sensibilities that cannot be replicated easily in a school environment (Harreveld, Danaher & Kenny, 2003). Roadblocks to partnerships are encountered from the points of inception when leaders of the different parties negotiate legal, ethical, safety and resourcing implications. Leaders report that roadblocks affect the durability and efficacy of partnerships over time as successive representatives on each side come and go. All school and industry partnerships were seen as being caught in the vagaries of global and local economic influences, and the responses of large and small workplaces to these.

Partnerships operate under shared arrangements among schools, other providers and community collectives. Yet there is such diversity among these partnerships and schools that leaders suggest there is no one model to fit all. For example, a school-industry partnership negotiated with the local ‘Dingo digger’ operator proved fruitful for students, their parents and the local community. Likewise, the DET leaders sign off on strategic state-wide partnerships with large multi-national resource companies, industries and universities which is also fruitful to stakeholders.

Each partnership is unique to its own purpose with some encompassing a whole-of-industry perspective. Negotiating explicit partnership arrangements and then managing them is a relatively
new challenge for education leaders at all levels from head office to schools in the bush. It continues to be a challenge because partnerships require continued maintenance. For example:

*I've got a very good relationship with all the principals of the schools. We have built that relationship. It's always difficult when a head principal leaves and you get another one. But that's okay; we build those relationships* (General Manager).

The leaders we interviewed reported that the benefits of school-industry partnerships include, but are not limited to:

- increased retention rates by enabling broader curriculum offerings
- increased attractiveness to students and parents who may themselves be those involved in partnerships and/or who did not benefit from such partnerships themselves when they were at school
- beneficial relationships established with local employers who may be parents or relatives of students from the school
- students who would otherwise have left school but who now are more engaged in all senior secondary schooling learning opportunities (also see Smith, 2004 for similar findings).

The most established partnerships are those that provide structured work experience, SATs and university-link programs. Through such partnerships, young people have opportunities to transition into technical and further education pathways and achieve recognition for their studies in their QCE. The opportunities provided for young people by this education-training-work interface include the often hard-to-measure learning outcomes.

*I think it's the incidental skills that they're learning that are so important ... But it's those other skills that they're learning, like just time management, communicating, all of those basic skills that as adolescents are growing up, are important. Role modelling by adults in a different environment ... their competencies, that's the sort of stuff that you can't measure* (Regional Reform Coordinator).

School-industry partnerships provide opportunities for young people to find out about themselves and their aspirations regarding what they may wish to do and/or not do when they finish Year 12. For example:

*As part of your work experience or your industry engagement, go and spend a couple of weeks in the fire station and come back with 'there's no way that I'm going to be a fireman' ... and that's a great learning experience so back you go to your SET Plan. 'I discovered that I really don't want to do this after all'* (Regional Executive Director).
Case 3: An industry-schools partnership

The Queensland Mineral and Energy Academy (QMEA) is a state-wide industry-schools partnership operating across education systems in association with a large complex industry. The partnership represents industry leaders thinking globally and operating locally in partnership with education leaders who understand adolescent young people and the curriculum opportunities offered through senior secondary schooling. The Queensland Resources Council (QRC), the Queensland Government, and training and academic providers constitute the partnership members. The QRC is a not-for-profit peak industry association representing Queensland companies engaged in mining, mineral processing, oil and gas production, and electricity generation.

The QMEA is now primarily industry funded and has grown to be one of the largest schools/industry partnership programs in Australia.

If you are in a school and you want to talk to [someone] in our particular industry you can contact the QMEA. If you are in an industry that wants to talk to kids in school you talk to us. We are the one stop shop (Director).

The QMEA operates a regional model of organisation. Each region represents a cluster of schools and is serviced by a QMEA Project Implementation Field Officer (PIFO) who works directly with schools through the QMEA supported Key Teacher program. As of 2011, the QMEA website reports there are 31 schools (28 state schools and 3 non-state) across 6 regions: Northern, Central North, Central South, Wandoan, Surat Basin, and Southern in the program (Retrieved 10 September from http://www.qmea.org.au).

The PIFOs work closely with key teachers and guidance officers to ensure that schools and students are well informed of the pathways and options available in the industry. Students and teachers are encouraged and supported to participate in learning activities that may be Academy-wide or specific to particular regions.

Initiatives include, but are not limited to: work experiences, SATs, special programs, awards, camps, excursions, industry-sponsored scholarships (for Years 11-12 and university), specific VET courses (e.g., Certificate I Resources and Infrastructure Operations, Certificate II Resources and Infrastructure Workplace Preparation).

The choice for school leaders is whether they engage with the QMEA and its services or not.

History of the QMEA

The QMEA was formed in 2005 as a joint Queensland Government and QRC initiative to:
• Meet the industry’s workforce needs by identifying and encouraging highly capable young people to enter the industry whether at the skilled operator, trade paraprofessional or
Leaders Closing the Gap in Youth Attainment and Transitions

- Promote the community engagement work by sponsor companies which encourage a positive profile for themselves and the industry as a whole across school communities.
- Provide meaningful access to schools and students while benefiting the schools through access to work experience, scholarships, awards and training programs for students and staff.

It describes itself as a ‘virtual academy’ because it is not based in a school site rather it operates across that state through a regional but connected zonal structure. While the QMEA works with those industries using the hub and spoke model, it has not worked on a centre-based model. The activities it organises for students and teachers occur in a multitude of industry sites across the state.

Issues arising

Real work-world experiences

Young people encounter many challenges in their transitions from school to work and/or further education and/or training. For example, companies have different employment practices and diverse attitudes towards students’ capabilities. Some workplaces are resistant to having students on site for either work experience or work placement. This presents a dilemma for school leaders seeking to provide authentic real-world experiences for young people. The QMEA provides students with access to work related experiences that they would not otherwise access; however, it operates in an industry that has been reluctant to allow student access to their sites except in limited and controlled circumstances.

Curriculum partnerships

The QMEA does not itself offer a senior secondary schooling curriculum. This is in contrast to other school-industry partnership schools and academies noted in this Report. It is not possible to judge its efficacy or effect by the same metrics because the academy is not registered as a school (either state or non-state).

It is in essence a brokerage service—a one-stop shop—for connecting companies in the minerals and energy industry with schools, TAFE Institutes, and universities. Through this brokerage, curriculum partnerships may be fostered as in the development of the two Certificate courses in Resources Infrastructure. Transition pathways into SATs and/or university engineering degrees are also facilitated through the work experiences tours and programs such as the ‘senior engineering camp’ reported in annual reports of member schools.

Who benefits?

While it is clear that both students and industry benefit from having the one stop shop of the
Leaders Closing the Gap in Youth Attainment and Transitions

QMEA, it raises the issue of industry involvement in recruiting through schools into their industries. This seems reasonable as the QMEA is primarily funded by the industry. In the end it is assisting an industry to recruit the types of employees that it needs. Schools receive no specific funding to enable them to participate in QMEA programs.

Not all 31 schools are as yet fully engaged or integrated into the QMEA and its offerings. From an analysis of publicly available data from 17 of those schools’ curriculum, teacher professional learning and school annual reports (Cui, 2011) there is no clear evidence of educational impact beyond participation. The extent to which this partnership has been integral to Year 12 outcomes and transition pathways to further education, training and/or work cannot be determined from the available data.

Issues emerging for partnerships

School-industry partnerships provide highly visible curriculum packages designed to articulate with further education and training pathways into occupations that leaders expect will provide young people with worthwhile life/work outcomes. Partnerships among schools are vital for opening up the benefits of these partnerships to as many young people as possible throughout Queensland. For this reason, the hub and spoke model identified in Case 3 was intended for all differentiated specialist academies and high schools:

*Each of the projects works on a hub and spoke school model. A State high school is the hub and we have six or more schools ... tagged as gateway schools (State-level Director)*

For the state, denominational and independent schools, such partnerships also facilitate staff capacity building efforts. These partnerships support work-integrated education and training that in turn enhance successful post-school transitions.

5.2.2 Students/school partnerships: alternative schooling options

Not all young people survive well in secondary schools. For students whose educational needs are not met in the mainstream, the importance of partnership takes on new significance. A survey of Flexible Learning Services (FLS) undertaken by the ETRF implementation team between July and October 2003 found that 121 known providers of Queensland’s FLS made educational and social provisions for 5796 young adults disengaged from schooling, or at risk of doing so (Queensland Government, 2004).

The young people who attend these schools represent a diverse population of Indigenous and non-Indigenous males and females of secondary school age. They have typically experienced one or more significant and complex educational, social, developmental, psychological, health, legal or familial situations which demand unique responses. In May 2010, Mills and McGregor published ‘Re-engaging students in Education—Success factors in alternative schools’, identified that flexible learning programs are for young people who:
• prefer flexible learning arrangements
• prefer small schools or classes
• are from a range of age groups
• are returning after long absences from education
• are looking for qualifications
• did not like some aspect of their previous school.

These young people have been further described as having:

• very poor literacy and numeracy skills
• had contact with the juvenile justice system or are in the care of the Department of Child Safety
• had repeated difficulty conforming to the behaviour requirements of mainstream education and training
• mental illness or at risk of engaging in self-harming behaviours or substance abuse
• been excluded from school
• a generational history of early school leaving.

They may also be homeless, or young parents, or with a generational history of unemployment.

These young people can be described as disengaged with or living at the margins of formal schooling. Often mainstream schools will not accept them and/or they are unwilling to conform to the expectations of such schools. The SET planning process, which supports students in mainstream settings to explore their future career trajectory and make educational choices, is manifestly insufficient to support these students to benefit from a quality educational experience that will provide employment opportunities in the future.

Because of their life circumstances many of these young people have rejected mainstream education and their engagement with educational services is a partnership that requires commitment from both parties. Mills and McGregor (2010) interviewed young people who had rejected mainstream schooling. They found that:

Most ... were highly engaged with the earning opportunities provided them at these sites ... This engagement appeared to be linked to a combination of factors related to the curricula offered, pedagogical practices employed, staff relationships with young people and philosophies underpinning each centre’s organisation (p. 10.)

The scenario of the Flexible Learning Centres (FLCs) (Case 4) illustrates the use of state resources in cross-sectoral and inter-systemic partnerships among non-government organisations (including faith-based organisations), non-state schools and a number of Queensland’s government departments. In this sense, these non-state schools are no different from the private, independent and church-affiliated schools, which are underwritten by the State Government. However, it is their partnerships with the young people who attend them that are their defining characteristic.
Case 4: Partnerships with young people at risk

Under legislation overseen by the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board, Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) operates a number of schools under an umbrella organisation known as the Flexible Learning Centre Network (FLCN). In 2010 there were 497 students from Year 8 to Year 12 attending programs at these sites, which in Queensland were located at Albert Park, Deception Bay, Kingston, Noosa, Townsville and Mt Isa (Retrieved from http://www.ereflc.org.au/). These FLCs constitute a community response to the needs of young people for whom school is not where they want to be.

Thus, this type of partnership is predicated upon its relationship with each young person. In principle, this is no different from relationship expectations with young people in all schools, colleges or academies. In practice, for the FLCs’ leaders, it means that young people must commit to the principles of engagement; namely, respect, participation, safe and legal actions and honesty.

EREA’s FLCN has emerged initially from partnerships with communities in which people want to provide education opportunities for their young people who either are, or are at risk of becoming disengaged from learning. Government departments, non-government organisations, city councils and other agencies are the stakeholders with whom such young people interact.

The first Annual Report of the Mt Isa FLC was presented in 2010 and it describes how this FLC operates.

1. Each young person has a culturally appropriate pastoral care team that consists of a teacher for core literacy and numeracy and one other significant worker chosen by the young person.
2. There are also youth workers and education support workers who work with the group (19 young people reported as enrolled in 2010).
3. The pastoral care team shares responsibility for the co-development of personal and educational goals that include, but are not limited to:
   - in-house mentoring and advocacy
   - a culturally appropriate support focus
   - supporting the young person and their families in times of emotional crisis or practical need
   - maintaining the close partnership among school, student and parent/carer
   - working in partnership with other agencies who are involved with students, e.g., Child and Youth Mental Health Service, Department of Communities, Youth Justice
   - supporting and mentoring young people who live independently
   - helping students to build capacity and resilience in social and emotional aspects of their lives
   - informally helping young people develop positive self-concept
   - supporting young people with issues of drug misuse and self-harm
   - networking with other agencies such as Youth and Family Services to provide
• specialist assistance, e.g., family mediation, counselling, anger management
• working with a Child Protection Officer as required.


History of the FLCN

The FLCN evolved from a web of inter-related concerns:
• government policy
The State Government’s ETRF White Paper continued its support of partnerships among school, home, community and the identification of students who are required to be meaningfully engaged with learning (see Appendix 1).
• EREA’s strategic direction.

During 2008 and early 2009, EREA conducted research into flexible educational models aimed at supporting these young people. The research examined existing models that were operating as part of the EREA network, such as the FLCs in Queensland and Annexes in New South Wales, as well as alternative models such as FAME in South Australia and Care Schools in Western Australia. The EREA Board approved the recommendation that a coordinated national approach be adopted for the delivery of services aimed at enhancing learning outcomes for young Australians, especially those who are marginalised—and so, in September 2009, EREA launched a national program, ‘Youth+’, inclusive of all Queensland FLCs. The Executive Director of EREA, Dr Wayne Tinsey, noted that:

The aim of the [Youth+] program is to build strong relationships based on trust and respect with young people, their families, and communities through a positive education experience. Our accredited flexible education services throughout Queensland have shown the incredible success that can be achieved when we engage young people, who are traditionally referred to as ‘disenfranchised’ or ‘marginalised’, in a positive, relevant and holistic approach to learning and well-being. Youth+ will now build on this success.

(Retrieved from http://www.erea.edu.au/educational-leadership/)

Issues arising

1. Breaking the cycle of academic disadvantage.
2. In 2009 the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland commissioned research into the extent to which alternative schools were able to engage young people who had been failed by the mainstream sector. Mills and McGregor (2010) found that ‘some alternative schools may provide a warm and caring environment, but fail to break the cycle of reproduction of academic disadvantage (p. 8).
3. Equity of access to services and funding.
4. The numbers catered for by organisations like EREA FLCN are small. However, there remains an identified need for this type of secondary schooling.
5. Longer term outcomes for students.
It is not clear how successful these schools are in transitioning these young people into productive, economically independent futures. Of the schools in the FLCN only three (Noosa, Albert Park and Kingston) had ex-students who participated in the 2010 Next Steps survey of post-school pathways. The numbers and percentages of those completing the survey were low (53%).

**Issues for student/school partnerships**

Students attending FLCs are among the very people intended to be the beneficiaries from the QCE and the NP YAT. They may be unlikely to meet QCE requirements by 18 years of age, yet with the right support and programs can achieve suitable qualifications and employment by age 24. Yet there continues to be ongoing advocacy to increase resources into this service sector.

*Many alternative schools have been dependent upon funding arrangements that are at times ad hoc and uncertain. Current models of funding do not seem to align with the flexible ethos of alternative schooling sites and the specific needs of their students* (Mills & Macgregor, 2009, p.11).

Integrated government and non-government policy frameworks and on-the-ground actions that address specifically three key factors impacting education outcomes for such young people are necessary:

- continuity (of schooling and living arrangements)
- choices (of alternative education options with school personnel committed to working with them)
- costs (of fees at TAFE/other training providers, uniforms/work clothes, books/technologies, transport; not all covered by Youth Allowance)

(Testro, 2010, p. 14)

Therefore, alternative schools such as those in the FLCN will be seen as successful if they ‘provide an education or training entitlement to young people aged 15-24 to make a successful transition from schooling into further education, training or employment’ (COAG, 2009, p. 4).

The establishment of such partnerships with students requires a different set of leadership skills and capacity building and quite different attitudes and skills for staff in these settings. Yet like their peers in mainstream schools these leaders have two sets of partnerships to maintain—their internal relationships with students and staff, and their external relationships with community and government agencies.
5.3 Partnerships leading VET from the margins to the mainstream

The boundaries between academic and vocational pathways continue to be blurred as students ‘package’ their senior secondary schooling learning pathways. A key feature of these pathways is the growth in VET as integral to senior secondary schooling. What is new is that VET Certificates are now available for accreditation at senior secondary. The pressure to provide more VET options that boost students’ chances to access the high-level qualifications in areas of labour market demand, and make realisable transitions to worthwhile work, now informs debates over the type and quality of VET being offered in senior secondary schooling. Access Economics (2009) has shown that the projected fields of job growth up to 2020 are in areas of construction, health care and social assistance, with substantial declines in manufacturing, and little job growth in mining and financial and insurance services. Packaged VET courses now contribute to students’ QCE. The expectation is that all students exit with qualifications in areas of employment growth, and that these qualifications will put them on track to further relevant education and/or training. These issues provide leaders with the current focus for debate and innovation with respect to the type of VET being offered to students.

Here it is useful to consider the impact of the pathways developed to date in terms of two different groups. There are those who were already succeeding in the previous system. Then, there were those who were disenfranchised from schooling, and for whom Queensland’s education and training reforms promised to improve learning opportunities and outcomes. The siphoning off of young people into VET pathways that are not providing quality in terms of youth attainment and transition to work opportunities can have negative consequences. However, the consequential long-term damage to the life chances of disenfranchised young people may not always have been appreciated. There is growing awareness of the need for students to exit with qualifications in areas of employment growth, and that these qualifications put them on track to further relevant education and/or training. Now; however, it is also evident that it will take many years to redress the imbalances with respect to qualifications and areas of labour demand so as to close the gap in terms of youth attainment and transition.

VET is moving from the margins of schooling to mainstream senior secondary schooling while its educational, social and economic status remains contentious. However, for many young people, their teachers, parents, communities and employers, VET is perceived to be fostering positive transitions into further education, training and/or work (see Case 2, Chapter 4). The move has been incubating for a long time. For example, VETnetwork Australia is a practitioner organisation of over 700 members. VETnetwork Australia emerged from a 1995 national conference funded by the (then) Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Training under the National Professional Development Program and was formally constituted in 1998 (Harreveld & Frost, 2008, p. 1). VETnetwork Australia’s capacity building professional development activities have contributed significantly to a nation-wide response to providing pathways for the increasing numbers of students required to stay on at school to complete Year 12 (or the equivalent).

For Queensland education and training leaders VETiS is now synonymous with SAT. It represents a ‘stand-alone’ model for VET delivery in which students demonstrate competency and are assessed
against national units of competency relevant to a particular trade. These leaders have developed two other models of VETiS delivery. In ‘embedded VET’ the required competencies are inferred as part of meeting subject assessment standards. The ‘packaged VET’ involves national units of competency being packaged with state-accredited subjects but assessed separately. While extremely successful for many young people, these VET pathways have not escaped criticism (Knight, 2008). On the one hand, completion of a whole VET Certificate provides points towards a QCE. This is a positive step, which values such academic attainment. On the other hand, students may only complete some of the units of competency in a course and thus are not be eligible for the VET Certificate, even though they gain points towards the QCE.

Our analysis of the impact of VETiS on retention rates to Year 12 and completion of VET Certificates found that while retention from Year 10 to Year 11 may increase, that is some decrease in retention rates from Year 11 to Year 12. The NCVER found a similar trend (Knight, 2008). One explanation advanced by leaders we interviewed is that students’ exposure to employers and worthwhile work opportunities through the VETiS pathways, lead to many being offered jobs and some of them taking up these opportunities, even if it means not completing Year 12 at school. However, the same young people continue with their VET training and ultimately complete the qualification/s. Thus, education and training leaders in Queensland are concerned that successful attainment in one sector (their students gaining a job) is deemed attrition in another (not completing their QCE). As the following case (Case 5) illustrates, leaders are grappling with this complex amalgam of issues.

One region supports its schools by providing the leadership for this multiplicity of partnerships and relationships at a regional level. Regional/ district leaders used the opportunities presented through the ETRF agenda to explore and actively support opportunities within the local community to develop and deliver VET programs across schools. These opportunities arose from:

- good local knowledge of employment possibilities and the needs of local industries
- partnerships with local employers
- partnerships with TAFE and private RTOs
- project officers with briefs to coordinate and make the links
- ETRF funding
- the creation of the Metropolitan Schools Training Unit (MTSU)—an RTO.
Case 5: A regional response to transition pathways

Regional Leaders are initiating transition pathways for young people in the Brisbane Metropolitan Region that are resourced through:

- local knowledge of employment possibilities and the needs of local industries
- partnerships with local employers, universities, TAFE and private RTOs
- reform agenda funding (initially ETRF, now NP YAT).

Three major leadership initiatives offer transition pathways in this region:

- formation of a pathways team staffed by experienced teachers, former administrators and ETRF coordinator/s
- development of an accredited RTO, known as the MTSU
- maintenance and extension of the Accounting Pathways and Healthy Futures programs.

Pathways team and the MTSU

The Metropolitan Region’s Pathways Team is currently funded through NP YAT. An ongoing role of the Pathways Team is to explore new possibilities for providing additional vocational pathways. Once these programs are negotiated and established they may be delivered through a range of providers. However, the most significant leadership strategy that has facilitated good access for schools to a range of programs has been the creation of the region’s own RTO, i.e., MSTU.

The MSTU currently offers the following qualifications to metropolitan state schools: Certificate IV in Justice Administration and Certificate III in Accounts Administration. In 2012 the MTSU intends to offer the following additional qualifications: Certificate III in Business, Hospitality, Fitness, Indigenous Land Management, Sport and Recreation; Certificate II in Horticulture; and Certificate 1 in General Construction.

Accounting Pathways

‘We have multiple pathways. For the kid who may not be strictly OP or OP eligible for a university course can still get into Accounting’ (Executive Director Schools). One of the success stories of this regional initiative has been the Accounting Pathways program. Regional (formerly district) leaders had identified that local employers were experiencing a shortage of young people with general accounts administration skills, not necessarily at a university level. In addition, student enrolments in Senior Accounting were static and even falling in many schools.

By 2011 there were 173 students across 20 schools enrolled in Senior Accounting and FNS 30310 Certificate III in Accounts Administration through the MTSU. This pathway enables students to earn up to 12 QCE points for the combination Certificate and QSA subject; and to gain a vocational pathway qualification to employment and/or tertiary study. Students are not required to do work placement. However, over the two years of the program (Years 11 and 12), two to three industry exposure days are run for students to introduce them to employment and tertiary
study options.

The FNS30310 course is facilitated by Accounting teachers within the schools under the guidance and supervision of the course coordinator from MTSU. All training materials, workbooks and assessment materials are provided by MSTU to ensure the full AQTF requirements of the Certificate III Accounts Administration course are met. The Accounting Pathways program now provides, ‘the link to the tertiary and the vocational into the industry’ (ETRF Coordinator).

**Healthy Futures**

The Healthy Futures program initially offered a Certificate III in Aged Care but currently offers students a Certificate III Allied Health, predominately delivered through TAFE Institutes with articulation into Bachelor degree programs at the University of Queensland and the Australian Catholic University. The original key partners were: Masonic Care Queensland, The Prince Charles Hospital Health Service District, Brisbane North Institute of TAFE, Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE, and Schools in the Brisbane North District (Queensland DETA, n.d.).

While there continues to be a vocational placement component, this has been difficult to organise; although some students do obtain work experience in some hospitals. In 2012, 40 SATs will be offered within this program. Also, in 2012, students will be offered a Certificate II in Allied Health or a Certificate II in Primary Indigenous Health, to be delivered together but with different electives. These courses are currently being marketed to students in Year 10 throughout the Metropolitan Region.

From its beginning in the former northern, central and western district of this Metropolitan Region, the Healthy Futures program was seen as successful and extended state-wide. A curriculum package was available through a DVD and a state coordinator who operated at a whole-of-government level across both private and public school sectors supported the program. In July 2011 the funding for the position of state-wide coordinator ceased. Regional leaders re-established its coordination for the state sector only, and the program is now managed and supported through the Pathways Team.

The start-up phase in 2005-2006 required high-level leadership in all participating organisations because:

> You can’t go in and just deal with whoever runs the ward or the grounds or whatever. To get that entrée is not easy … this whole notion for us of relationship management is something new but it’s becoming increasingly important to get entrée into the right levels of all these places (Executive Director Schools).

Since that time, it has taken considerable ongoing negotiation and problem solving to keep the program available to students.
History of regional initiatives

Since the co-location of Stafford-Geebung districts in 2002, the area of Brisbane north of the Brisbane River has explored possibilities for providing quality vocational opportunities for students. The area has undergone several name and boundary changes under restructures within the DET and since October 2010 has been part of the Metropolitan Region. However, through boundary, personnel and funding changes they have been able retain a district/ regional focus on VET delivery across schools. The creation of the MTSU, the Accounting Pathways program and the Healthy Futures program are examples of the initiatives undertaken by groups who were interviewed as part of this research Project that have consolidated to provide quality vocational options for students.

Regional/ district leaders used the opportunities presented through the ETRF agenda to explore and actively support opportunities within the local community to develop and deliver VET programs across schools. They were able to access new funding sources when the ETRF funds ceased.

Issues arising

Access to work placement

Student access to the Healthy Futures transition pathways continues to be problematical. The program is dependent on students being able to access the Certificate course through a TAFE, and the availability of work placement. It is very difficult to get ongoing work placements for students, particularly in the hospital sector. Hospitals have a wide range of groups trying to access various forms of work placement from TAFE and universities, as well as schools. The best work-oriented provision currently available is work experience rather than placement in a limited number of hospitals. While some Aged Care facilities have been willing to continue work placement, students have not been interested in undertaking this type of work placement. Regardless of leadership intention, the practicality of having students access work placement has required constant focus and coordination and has not lived up to the optimistic expectations of those who initiated this Project.

Access to TAFE courses

Both programs were originally dependant on access to TAFE courses. This access had to be renegotiated on a yearly basis. The consequent problems of personnel change and timetabling changes led to an evolution in the Accounting Pathways program. With the creation of the MTSU, problems associated with the program have been addressed. The region’s own RTO now offers the Certificate III Accounts Administration. The work placement competencies are delivered and assessed by teachers within the regular school curriculum. These features make it much more manageable for schools and this is reflected in the high student participation rates. The Healthy Futures program remains dependant on access to TAFE courses.
Sustainability

The effort needed to sustain these programs was recognised by the leaders who established them.

_The Healthy Futures and the Accounting are very much local stuff, which literally lives and dies by the vagaries of government funding … it’s got to be owned by skills [councils] and industry (Executive Director Schools)._ 

The rise and fall of the Healthy Future program is illustrative of the problems of sustaining a program, which relies on such complex relationships and partnerships. The Region has sustained these programs by strategic decision making which has retained personnel at the regional level (maintaining corporate knowledge), and by sourcing other funds. The Pathways Team in the Metropolitan Region is now NP YAT funded and continues to explore options for students, and to negotiate with employers and schools.

Issues emerging for leading VET

The language of transition and pathways has become so embedded that entry to tertiary institutions is now seen as the academic pathway that also leads to employment prospects. The notion of attending university as part of a general, liberal education has all but disappeared from our vocabulary. Indeed universities are increasingly marketing themselves as providing vocational pathways to the professions necessary for a knowledge economy. While VET provides pathways, it is also dependent upon effective partnerships to make it work for young people and schools.

5.4 Partnerships for academic and vocational pathways

Another capacity building strategy has been the creation of academic and/or vocational pathways, which are based on formal partnerships between the DET and industries or between DET and tertiary institutions. Both these arrangements have arisen from high-level negotiations, which lead to significant expenditure in the development of a site, a curriculum program or a service that provides students throughout the state with a specific pathway into an industry or a specific tertiary option. ‘What we were looking for was to provide an end-to-end high school to employment that was inclusive of schooling, TAFE and university’ (State-level Education Director).

The first of these has been the development of partnerships with specific industries to create specialised learning pathways for young people across Queensland (Cui, 2011; also see Alderighi, Cento, Nijkamp, & Rietveld, 2007). Examples of these are the QCWT, Aviation High, and the QMEA (see Case 3). Industries that were seeking to access a trained workforce wanted to partner with DET to develop student awareness of their industry and potentially to provide students who had at least the early development of skillsets required for these industries.
The QCWT opened in March 2007 as a joint partnership venture among DET, the University of Southern Queensland, the Queensland Wine Industry, the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation and Southern Downs Regional Council. ‘We put in for Federal money around a skills centre [for QCWT] … and it is a true partnership of several groups’ (State-level Education Director).

The college facilitates education and training at secondary, TAFE and tertiary levels through its education partners. They are:

- the thirteen Gateway Schools to the Wine Tourism industry
- the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE
- the University of Southern Queensland (Faculty of Sciences; Faculty of Business)
- the Stanthorpe State High School and QCWT. Co-located with Stanthorpe State High School, the QCWT operates the Banca Ridge winery, a cellar door and bistro, conference and function centre to improve workforce skills for the wine tourism industry (Retrieved from http://www.usq.edu.au/qcwt/college/role).

This unique partnership has fostered both academic and vocational curriculum development in viticulture, agriculture, horticulture, hospitality, tourism and business for the wine industry. Students are connected with the different aspects of the industry through work experience arrangements, structured work placements, career development, school-based traineeships and cadetships. In 2008, for example, this cross-curricular, multi-faceted partnership provided ‘specialist training in wine tourism to several hundred secondary students, more than 60 TAFE students and 30 wine science undergraduates’ (Retrieved 5 September 2011 from http://www.usq.edu.au/qcwt/college/role).

The aerospace project is another partnership among DET, Boeing Australia Ltd and Aviation Australia, arranged to enhance pathways for secondary students into the aviation and aerospace industries. Hendra Secondary College close to Brisbane Airport was selected to become involved in this project. It was re-named Aviation High and commenced classes with 225 students in January 2007. It is now the curriculum coordination hub for 16 Aerospace Project Gateway Schools around Queensland (Retrieved from http://aviationhigh.eq.edu.au/).

*In aerospace … we had the Department, the training organisation, Boeing was the key industry player and they brought along four significant industry partners … we’ve created Aviation High School (State-level Education Director).*

The QSA’s Years 8 to 12 subjects have been contextualised with aviation and aerospace industry input into curriculum content. The partnership meshes intersecting interests of schools, the QSA, training providers (RTOs and ERTOs), university providers, and industry employers.

*Aerospace Australia have donated a flight simulator. So all of the curriculum there, the maths, the science, the rest are all aviation flight related. ABH Australia is putting on the table places for 24 traineeships for aircraft engineers … Smith Engineering, Air Services Australia, Aviation Australia,*
Qantas, Virgin and others put scholarships on the table for kids doing engineering. QUT and UQ have both bought into it as well (Executive Director Schools).

In principle, this hub and spoke model has been designed to provide industry-focused school to work transitions.

Aviation High and the QCWT are examples of a hub and spoke mode of organisation which operates in senior secondary schooling across a range of schools. The spokes link to nodes, which are affiliated schools that retained their names; for example, Mt Isa State High School, Toolooa State High School and St Joseph’s Nudgee College. In hub schools, pedagogical content knowledge is shaped or reshaped initially through the curriculum around a particular industry, and not particular jobs. Students remain enrollees of their school; however, they access programs and services through the hub school.

Another partnership offering specific academic pathways to students is the Queensland academies model—Queensland Academy of Creative Industries (QACI), QASMT, Queensland Academy of Health Sciences (QAHS). DET has entered partnerships with three universities—University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology and Griffith University—to offer an educational program for high performing students. ‘The labs at our academies are purpose built at university level’ (State-level Education Director). The programs are characterised by accelerated studies, extension and enrichment work with universities, industry experience, personal and social development. The IBD program is the curriculum framework for all academies. Students have to go through a selection process to gain entry to an academy.

Two of the academies are physically co-located with the relevant university: QACI at the QUT Kelvin Grove campus and QAHS at the Gold Coast Griffith campus. Each has a series of specific arrangements with their university link partner to provide students with learning experiences related to their area of expertise—Creative Industries, Health related industries, and Science and Engineering. In all three academies there is an academic pathway identified (the IBD). This IBD curriculum does not provide for the ‘mix and match’ transition pathways opportunities available under the QCE. For some students, this may not be a problem because the IBD curriculum may be a good fit with their learning ethic and future career trajectory that include university studies in particular disciplines leading to professional lives that they consider meaningful.

Capacity building for engagement in these new organisational models of schooling begins with the induction of the principals, senior administrators (e.g., deputies, heads of department) and teachers who apply for, and gain the positions in these innovative inter-systemic ventures. They undertake quite substantial professional learning to learn the content knowledge of either new and/or revised subject matter. New subjects have since been developed for dual accreditation with the QSA and respective industry bodies. Curriculum in the node schools is slowly changing, with some becoming more integrated in the respective hub and spoke academy curriculum. However, this is a slow and cautious process.
Today, the full-scale impact of these partnerships across all these schools, colleges and academies that constitute any one of these programs is difficult to discern. In part, this may be because the goals for the hub and spoke mode of organising senior secondary schooling across a range of schools are ‘ambiguous and often conflicting’ (Sadovnik, 2007, p. 139). In addition, staff in the schools constituting these partnerships change over time. This adds further uncertainty to the complexities of realising hoped-for outcomes and the ambiguities of goals.

For leaders of these schools, no matter what they are called, there is the same accountability for Year 12 outcomes with no evidence of enhanced autonomy to achieve those outcomes. Their Year 12 results are still published and promulgated via the same media as all other secondary schools. Furthermore, both the hub and spoke and the academy model represents a considerable financial investment of capital and resources from the partners; with the government the major investor in these state schools.

**Summary**

The transition (education/training/work) pathways and school-industry partnerships that exist now are the result of many years of effort on the part of leaders working in state and national level bureaucracies, education and training regional services as well as local schools and their communities. Leaders have functioned as transition brokers and engaged in multifaceted partnerships at local community and state-wide levels.

_The number of success stories only comes about when there’s a robust partnership between schools and industry. And it doesn’t matter who has brokered that partnership ... but it only happens if you get a relationship_ (Regional Executive Director).

In senior secondary schooling goodwill among schools, industry and other agencies is a signature feature of successful partnerships. Where competition is balanced with camaraderie, partnerships can be established and sustained for the betterment of all students. In such cases, the goodwill was built up over the years, including prior to the Queensland Government’s reform agenda that has served education and training leaders very well. Hallmarks of good will include jocularity at meetings, instances of give and take, advocacy on behalf of the collective as well as individuals. This is not a commodity that has necessarily a direct monetary value; however, principals and other leaders are able to, and have to be able to articulate its characteristics in order to leverage access to valued and valuable resources. This is the basis of education partnerships that have withstood the vagaries of policy shifts and caprices of funding models over time.
Chapter 6—Leaders closing the gap: challenges in youth attainment and transition

The exercise of leadership to support students in a successful learning journey presents challenges and opportunities that have been identified at school, regional and state-wide levels throughout the education and training system. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 identified findings from previous research in leadership of reform agenda and innovations. This chapter presents new findings from the Project’s rich data set. Insights are provided into the ways in which interviewees and questionnaire respondents perceived leaders and their leadership in senior secondary schooling learning contexts. In addition, the findings build on statistical analysis of data related to young people’s transitions from senior secondary schooling.

6.1 Characteristics of leadership

Leadership is an elusive phenomenon although it has been extensively researched and reported. From the interview transcripts, descriptors of the phenomenon in this context were distilled. They were explored further through the questionnaire and the findings presented in order of significance based on an analysis of the Likert scaled responses.

Leadership descriptors

1. Leadership
   • is concerned with young people’s well-being
   • inspires others to achieve
   • makes a difference to the quality of teaching.

2. Leadership
   • requires curriculum knowledge
   • develops multi-level and multi-agency partnerships.

3. Leadership
   • requires courage to make decisions
   • can delegate
   • promotes opportunities to allow mentoring and work readiness training
   • brokers learning opportunities.

4. Leadership
   • builds capacity
   • requires the ability to understand statistical data
   • requires understanding of QSA operations.

Findings from the interview transcripts are mixed in relation to the following characteristics of leadership.

1. Leadership is not about compliance (14 out of 28 are in agreement, 12 out of 28 disagree and 2 are neutral).
2. Leadership is challenged through cross-sectoral tensions (10 out of 28 are in agreement, 9 disagree and 9 are neutral).

3. Leadership success is determined by publication of Year 12 outcomes (6 out of 27 completed responses generally agree, 18 disagree and 3 are neutral).

Of the 28 responses to this section, not all responses were valid with variances from 26 in one response to 27 in others (4 responses). From the calculation of means for each category, 22 out of 26 responses strongly agreed, agree and tended to agree overall with these leadership characteristics.

Leadership as characterised by the Project participants who shared their views in the interviews and survey, is more complex than Fullan’s (2010a, b & c) concept of ‘tri-level’ leadership. While it is multi-level, it is also distributed (for example among agencies, providers, parents, employers); and multi-faceted as it challenges the boundaries among these levels, sectors and systems.

6.2 Judging leadership success

The criteria state-level leaders use to judge the success of Queensland’s reforms to senior secondary schooling is important. Initial consideration was given to using key performance indicators relating to progression, satisfaction of students and staff, participation of young people, attainment of certificates, and the full-time work/study situation of 15 to 19 year olds. Current performance indicators in the DET’s Strategic Plan 2010-2014, aim to:

1. Have 92.5% of 20 to 24 year olds attain a Year 12 Certificate, or its equivalent, or Certificate II by 2015.
2. Close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students via increased student retention to Year 12.
3. Improve transitions from completion of Year 12, or its equivalent, to participation in further education, training and/or employment such that six months after completing Year 12, 88% of school leavers are to be engaged in either learning (Queensland DET, 2010c, p. 10).

However, as identified in Chapter 1, these key performance indicators are now part of the overarching NP YAT agenda. Queensland is a signatory to the realisation of these national goals and is participating in realising these projected targets.

Queensland’s education and training leaders—whether they are policy-makers, regional education and training authorities, or school community members—are making thoughtful and tactful use of earlier reform cycles. Building on prior learning from previous generations of major reforms in senior secondary schooling, leaders are working to evolve new iterations of these innovations to specifically align and integrate current developments with DET’s Strategic Plan 2010-2014. Leaders working in, and associated with secondary schools are working on the major reforms associated with Year 7, and the laying of strong educational foundations in the compulsory phase of schooling. In senior secondary schooling they are working to develop students with knowledge and skills for the economy. Leaders are focusing on attainment of Year 12 completions and effective youth transitions via
multiple pathways from school to tertiary education, training institutions and meaningful work (Queensland DET, 2010c, pp. 2-10).

Queensland’s leaders have made significant progress in carrying forward this generation of reforms to senior secondary schooling. Their success is judged in terms of the strategies and actions supported by COAG (MCEETYA, 2009).

The Australian Government supports:

*Increasing access to high quality, industry-recognised training at Certificate III, including through Trade Training Centres* (MCEETYA, 2009, p.12).

Leaders have worked to ensure that the majority of students have access to a wide range of Certificate I and II courses and there are now a variety of Certificate III courses available to some students.

The Australian Government supports:

*Partnerships with universities, registered training organisations, TAFE and businesses, to broaden the horizons of students, support educators and provide students with links to further training, education and employment opportunities* (MCEETYA, 2009, p.12).

Leaders at the local, regional and state levels throughout Queensland have established partnerships with the education, community and industry sectors. They have devoted significant time and energy to establishing and maintaining partnerships whose purpose is to provide educational benefit to students.

The Australian Government supports:

*Ensuring all students have access to quality support, information and advice to facilitate access to further education, training, careers, and employment options* (MCEETYA, 2009, p.12).

Leaders have substantially improved the support, information and advice that students (and often parents) receive to facilitate their access to further education, training, careers and employment options.

The Australian Government supports:

*Increasing access to differentiated and coordinated support and assistance for young people at the risk of disengagement from education and training* (MCEETYA, 2009, p.12).

Leaders have increased differentiated support for young people at risk of disengagement, and improved the coordination of such assistance. However, our statistical analysis below raises questions about the effectiveness of this in mitigating or mediating sources of disadvantage.
Our findings need to be read in the context of research by Nguyen (2010) which indicates that after two decades of reform nation-wide, the impact of a key initiative, VETiS, on Year 12 retention has not been as significant as initially envisaged. Thus, what equity issues arise for Queensland’s education and training leaders from our analysis of data detailing students’ outcomes for the period from 2006 to 2009?

Statistics analysis shows that leaders face the challenge of closing the gap between the policy targets set for senior secondary schooling and evidence of actual outcomes students obtained through their learning and training. Let us first consider the national situation by using the 2006 and 2007 reports VETiS statistics (NCVER, 2008, 2009a). These present Year 12 students’ VETiS outcomes according to course enrolment, attainment and completion (qualifications obtained). These outcomes are correlated with students’ SES, gender, location and Indigenous identity. Our analysis of this data revealed the following findings:

1. In 2007 159 800 students undertook VETiS across Australia, representing 31% of students undertaking senior secondary schooling school certificates.

2. In Queensland 42% of students took VETiS courses, which ranks as the second highest among Australian states and territories.

3. Across Australia, 56% of course enrolments in VETiS subjects resulted in an AQF statement of attainment. But less than one quarter of those enrolled (23%) in VETiS successfully completed an AQF qualification. Furthermore, enrolment in Certificate III was 11% and the completion rate was 8%.

4. In Queensland, VETiS course attainment percentage was 43% in 2007, 13% lower than the national average (56%). The completion rate was 25% (or 27%)\(^3\) only 2% higher than the national average (23%). Certificate II attainment rate (50%) was 5% lower than the national average (55%). Completion rate for Certificate II (46%) was 13% lower than the national average (59%).

5. VETiS course enrolments by males and females were almost even for Australia as a whole (52%/ 48%) and for Queensland (50%/ 50%). The course completion rate by females was higher than males across Australia (24%/ 22%) and in Queensland (16% / 14%). The course attainment and completion rate by Indigenous students was lower than that of their non-Indigenous peers across Australia and in Queensland.

We also analysed the Queensland Government’s Next Step reports (Queensland DEA, 2006; Queensland DET, 2009a; Queensland DETA, 2007, 2008). It was found that:

1. University was the most likely choice by young adults. In 2009 35.1% (n=12 261) of Year 12 students chose a university destination.

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\(^3\) 27% derives from another data source, Year 12 School Outcomes 2007 (Queensland Studies Authority, 2008).
2. The choice of VET after Year 12 declined from 2006 to 2009, but accounted for a little more than one quarter of the total number of students (28.6%, n=8848 in 2006; 27.1%, n=8939 in 2007; 26.2%, n=8788 in 2008; and 24.5%, n=8549 in 2009).

3. Year 12 completers who entered full-time work dropped from 17.4% in 2008 to 12.3% in 2009. The destination for those young adults designated as ‘other’ increased from 22% in 2008 to 28% in 2009.

The university destination rate in metropolitan regions was much higher than that in non-metropolitan regions from 2006 to 2009. This also applied to Indigenous young adults, with those living in metropolitan areas obtaining a higher percentage of university destinations. The VET destination rates in non-metropolitan Queensland were higher than for those students living in the metropolitan areas. The same was true for the full-time work destination rate of young people in non-metropolitan Queensland which was also higher than those in metropolitan regions.

Compared with their non-Indigenous peers, Indigenous Year 12 completers were less than half as likely to enter university. However, during 2006 to 2009 proportionally more Indigenous young adults choose VET destinations than did their non-Indigenous peers.

From 2006 to 2009 Year 12 completers from the highest SES group were twice as likely to enter university as those from the lowest SES group. More students from the lowest SES group chose VET as a post-Year 12 destination than did students from the highest SES group.

The analysis of the main VET destination of Year 12 completers shows that Certificate IV+ was a more favorable destination for Year 12 completers regardless their sub-categories. Young adults from the metropolitan area were more than twice as likely as those from non-metropolitan to choose a Certificate IV destination. Young adults from non-Indigenous backgrounds were also more likely than their Indigenous peers to choose a Certificate IV destination. In other words, from 2006 to 2009 relatively more Indigenous young adults and more young adults from the lowest SES background chose lower level VET Certificates (I-II) compared to those in the non-Indigenous groupings.

The evidence indicates that students’ VETiS outcomes and their choice of post-school destinations are unequal in relation to the level of Certificate qualification, where they live, their Indigenous identity, and their SES.

6.3 Leadership of senior secondary schooling for all

Leaders report enhanced positive self-belief among some young people who avail themselves of the alternative pathways and transitional arrangements. These provide diverse experiences appropriate for their individual learning needs. For example:

*The biggest positive change is in the kids who actually believe they can do something; they believe they’re worth something ... so the biggest improvement has been in the kids, in their self-respect and their self-esteem* (Principal).
Recognition by national and state leaders of vocational excellence is evident in the accreditation of VET as part of the QCE. This has brought change in the valuing of VETiS, communities and workplaces. ‘The cultural change has occurred because of certification’ (Principal). There is recognition of vocational excellence.

We’ve got some great stories. We’ve just had another recipient of the Australian Vocational Excellence prize. We had a Prime Minister’s vocational excellence winner from this school who was deaf, so we had some wonderful achievements coming through with students with disabilities, and we have a very large special education program. There’s a whole range of successful transitions happening for them, but also our at-risk students. We’ve been able to put them back up on a bike and they’ve started pedalling, and transition them out of school (Principal).

These leaders are now oriented to achieving diverse learning goals for their students. This leadership is capable of diagnosing individual differences, creating flexible organisational arrangements to ensure optimal conditions for students’ learning, and then making effective use of resources and personnel for achieving projected learning goals. Different orientations to leadership though point to the selective function schools can play in students’ transitions and learning choices post-Year 12. A policy promise from the Queensland Government is that:

All young people should have every chance to reach their full potential. We want to ensure that no-one misses out simply because the current system cannot neatly accommodate them (White Paper, Queensland Government, 2002, p. 16).

What became of the young people who were supposed to benefit most from the ETRF’s learning policy initiative? Have they in fact been the beneficiaries of this complex change agenda in senior secondary schooling? DET reports that the state:

- has a current retention rate of 77.5%, which is the third highest in Australia (ABS School retention data)
- had a Year 12 attainment rate for 20 to 24 year olds of 84.3% in 2008 and a projected rate of 86% for 2009 which is the third highest in Australia (ABS Education and Work survey and the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions)
- experienced an increase in the percentage of young people aged 15 to 17 who are engaged in education, training and/or work (ABS Labour Force Survey)
- continued to be the national SATs leader with 42% of Australia’s SATs uptake in the year to December 2008.
   (Queensland DET, 2010b, p. 1)

VET pathways work for some of the young people for whom they were intended. Indeed for some young people, VET has been a resounding success. However, we conducted a longitudinal analysis of the Next Step destination reports from 2006 to 2009. The outcomes suggest those students’ VETiS outcomes varied according to level of Certificate qualifications. Moreover, students’ outcomes are negatively impacted by their geographic location, socio-economic backgrounds and Indigenous
identity (also see Li, 2011). Further, the pathways work well for those industries and businesses that support students because they gain employees who they are more likely to retain, at least until their training is completed. The irony is that the schools that created these pathways are not recognised for this achievement. Their enrolment or completion rates (for VET qualifications and QCEs) are not commensurate with the effort they invested in SET planning, flexible curriculum arrangements, teaching strategies, partnership negotiations, and maintenance that made these unrecognised outcomes possible.

One possible reason for the strengthening of VET options in Queensland has been the public availability of data on the Year 12 OP. Principals realise the negative impact of publicly available data associated with having students in the ‘wrong’ course. Year 12 data, which shows too many low OP scores, creates a problem for the school’s standing in the community. Siphoning ‘non-performers’ out of OP courses makes the OP statistics look better. However, this may create other problems, such as increases in the non-completion rates in VET. There is a group of disengaged students who are not succeeding in any pathway, and who do not meet the criteria for the QCIA.

That the publication of all Year 12 outcomes now includes VET certificate completions is very important. This demonstrates an important intellectual accommodation between the academic and vocational pathways. However, it places considerable pressure on school leaders at all levels who are now held accountable for student outcomes across all pathways.

Young people from low SES groups continue to be less likely to participate in Year 12 than those from either the medium or high SES groups (Harreveld & Singh, 2008). Dalley-Trim, Alloway, Patterson and Walker (2007) reported that school careers advisors may advise academic-pathway students to take VETiS subjects in order to gain an advantage over their fellow academically-oriented peers, and to get some relief from the perceived rigours of academic studies. In contrast, undertaking VETiS may be presented as a viable option for students deemed to fit neither academic nor special education pathways. No doubt this advice is provided with the best intentions of enabling such young people to exit Year 12 with at least some qualification of potential worth in the world of work. However, the data from our Project suggests that it may be contributing to non-completion rates of VETiS Certificates as a percentage of overall enrolments.

Education and training leaders recognise the need for a ‘fit’ between their curriculum pathways offerings with the abilities and aspirations of individual students. Now that everyone is required to attend, schools face the important challenge of ensuring that the learning needs of all students are met. With the broadening of senior secondary schooling there are consequences for schools if disaffected students remain disengaged from any form of learning. This points to the increasing importance of the SET planning processes, and to the monitoring of student’s progress through this journey. SET Plans continue through Years 10, 11 and 12 and are meant to provide leaders, parents and students with increasingly more informed feedback on young people’s progression towards the attainment of a Year 12 qualification.
6.4 Implications for future leadership

Governments view education and training as an effective way to ensure young people and adults access opportunities to enhance their personal, social and economic wellbeing, and contribute to the economic development of Australia. The Queensland Government (2008) is no exception in this regard. DET leaders are engaging with, and responding to the targets set for the NP YAT agenda. DET has set targets of:

... 82% of students completing Year 12 to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE), International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD), VET Certificate II or higher, or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA) by 2012
... halving the gap in Indigenous Year 12 retention and attainment rates
... 92.5 per cent of young people aged 20-24 [having] attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification by 2015 (Queensland DET, 2010b, p. 2).

The challenge for Queensland’s education and training leaders is to close the gap between students’ VETiS outcomes and their actual achievement\(^4\) between 2012 and 2015.

More Indigenous students, students from low SES background, and those from non-metropolitan areas chose VET as their post-school destinations compared to their non-Indigenous, high SES metropolitan peers. Leaders face the challenge of deciding how best such data are to be interpreted. Some results may be interpreted as a failure to address inequity. This is a particular challenge because ‘mainstream education is inappropriate to the needs of at least some young people’ (te Riele, 2007, p. 56). Indigenous, low SES, and non-metropolitan students are said to need to access a non-academic alternative which VETiS is meant to provide; while there are also academic high achievers who are benefiting from VETiS as well.

\[ \text{So we’ve used the vocational programs for high-end kids—highly academic kids, to mix in with their academic program. We’ve used the lower levels of Cert Is and IIs around students with disabilities, around at-risk young people of disengaging. So I suppose that’s been our philosophy that there was a program there that we wanted students to engage in, so they started the learning journey, received a piece of paper, were successful, to keep them in that learning (Principal).} \]

Is there another interpretation for the data showing the gap between Indigenous, low SES, and non-metropolitan students and their peers? Governments are of the view that VET is an effective way to assist young adults ‘to overcome barriers to education, training and employment, and are motivated to acquire and utilise new skills’ (Australian Government, 2009). It may be that the expectation regarding the re-forming of senior secondary schooling and the role of VETiS in particular will take longer to resolve than governments’ expect or wish. Such nuanced interpretations of equity in senior

\(^4\) In Queensland, Certificate II attainment rate (50%) is 5% lower than the national average (55%). Completion rate for Certificate II (46%) is 13% lower than the national average (59%) (NCVER, 2009b).
secondary schooling pose complex challenges for leaders working to close the gap for Indigenous, low SES, and non-metropolitan students:

*Especially in regional areas where people come from poor backgrounds, you know. It’s better for them to leave school and be earning money and supporting the family rather than staying until year 12 and being a drain* (Executive Director Schools).

Another interpretation of equity in senior secondary schooling may be for leaders to focus on individual student needs for differentiation in their education and training. It could make it possible for students to take advantage of educational opportunities even if it means providing unequal compensatory programs in order to enable them to participate. Research on education equality should combine educational outcomes with an explanation of the social, cultural and economic factors influencing these outcomes. While current Queensland education policies treat students from Indigenous identity, low SES, rural and remote areas (Queensland Government, n.d., p. 9) as a distinct equity target group, the regional and economic diversity (social privilege) has not been diminished in education. Education equity initiatives need to be complemented with social policies.

The percentage of VETiS participation or VET related post-school destinations reflect only one aspect of VETiS implementation in Queensland. Even if 100% of students were involved in VETiS, this does not mean that students have equal opportunities for learning. That equality in one space reveals inequality in another indicates that there is no absolute equality and it cannot be assessed in a mechanical manner. Therefore, it is important that policy-makers carefully monitor and evaluate the interventions so as to get a better understanding of what can work in enhancing better education provision via the reduction of social disadvantage. It is suggested that there is a need to re-examine the accountability of public education to determine how these processes and strategies affect opportunities for nurturing individual potential.

*The important part of leadership is seeking out the opportunities. Making sure that the decisions that you might implement, I suppose, are reasonably successful. The ploy I take is some of our programs are pilot programs. They may never get up. But it gives you an opportunity to risk take. And as a leader you have to risk take. But as long as the outcomes come back to kids and the community. We engage kids. So it is about engagement, and getting kids to try things ... we’ve given, we’ve taken them places* (Principal).

In striving to reach national targets, schools are providing broader options for all students and better transitions. However, this does not mean that the advantages of this new system of senior secondary schooling are being accessed equally by, or are equally accessible to all young Queenslanders. There is still a need for policy and funding intervention to ensure that the currently disadvantaged groups do not continue to be disadvantaged.

Government policies claim that a VET pathway will help young people, especially those who are from disadvantaged background, to improve their participation in higher education, further training and employment (MCEETYA, 2009; Queensland DET, 2010c). However, completion rates of full
VET Certificates I and II, and especially Certificate III, are variable for students exiting Year 12. Queensland’s education and training are working assiduously on closing the gap in outcomes among these young people.

Other issues that cannot be controlled are impacting leadership initiatives. Students themselves also make judgments about their prospects for securing real jobs and choose accordingly. Students’ job opportunities are markedly constrained by the continuing impact of changes in the structure of the labour market in the private and public sectors. National and state governments make decisions about trade, industry, infrastructure, transport and essential services. These decisions impact either positively or negatively on young people’s transition into real jobs with the potential to make their lives worth living.

6.5 Leadership for capabilities

Senior secondary schooling provides opportunities for all young people to complete Year 12 and gain a qualification. These qualifications include the QCE, and/or an IBD, and/or a VET Certificate II or higher, or a QCIA. It is reasonable for the public to expect the state’s leaders will ensure a just distribution of education and training resources. What does this mean for leadership in Queensland’s geographically, economically, culturally and socially diverse learning communities?

In this study, we found that leadership strategies are directed towards developing young people’s capabilities. In doing so they concentrate ‘on removing obstacles in young people’s lives so that they can engage in learning options that are meaningful and valuable to them’ (Harreveld & Singh, 2008, p. 213). This capabilities approach to senior secondary schooling has a basis in the work of Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen (1992, 1999, 2006) and Martha Nussbaum (2003, 2011). Leaders adopting a capability approach are attentive to contextual issues associated with the school community’s history and geography as well as its cultural, economic and social conditions. Such an approach takes education beyond ‘a narrow set of marketable skills that are seen as having the potential to generate short-term profit’ (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 155). They are also attentive to developing young people’s capabilities for critical thinking, imagining and understanding the situation of other people, and being able to a grasp their place in the current global economic order and world history.

Education and training leaders, from the government through to schools, are working to provide all young people with the basic functionings of life, especially literacy and numeracy. This is necessary as other fundamentals of life and well-being are also being developed. Mindful that these are adolescents, who are potentially at the mercy of exploitative pressures beyond their control, Nussbaum (2011) argues that:

*The state’s commitment to the future capabilities of its citizens, together with its strong interest in having informed and capable citizens, justifies an aggressive approach: compulsory primary and secondary education, up to at least the age of sixteen, plus ample support and encouragement for higher education* (p. 156).
A capabilities-based national curriculum for compulsory schooling has been proposed for Australia. Reid (2005) argues that it would provide for the portability of capabilities-infused curriculum across state and territory jurisdictions, and dissolve the vocational-academic curriculum divide. His framework for thinking about curriculum and national curriculum collaboration focuses on nine capabilities in key areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Table 5). This framework is premised on an understanding that education and training should provide ‘greatly enhanced employment options, chances for political participation, and abilities to interact productively with others in society on a local, national and even global level’ (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 152). Steps are being taken in Queensland to address issues relating to a capabilities-based curriculum (see Cases 1 and 2, Chapter 5).

### Table 5: Capabilities Framework for an Australian Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge work</th>
<th>Innovation and design</th>
<th>Productive social relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active participation</td>
<td>Intercultural understandings</td>
<td>Interdependence and sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding self</td>
<td>Ethics and values</td>
<td>Communication and multiliteracies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reid, 2005, pp. 53–55

The Capabilities Framework for an Australian Curriculum proposes an alternative to the current dual system of academic curriculum underpinned by common curriculum elements and a vocational and training curriculum underpinned by a competency and qualifications model. One of the key leadership challenges has been managing and integrating the duality of two quite conceptually different systems into senior secondary schooling. The adoption of one conceptual model would significantly simplify the leadership demands of facilitating successful educational journeys for students.

From a policy perspective, Queensland is committed to the provision of ‘multiple pathways and diverse learning experiences to engage senior students’ through the development and support of ‘more effective pathways from school, between school and tertiary education and training institutions, and into work’ (Queensland DET, 2010c, p. 8). Queensland is using this policy position to underwrite the provision of articulated pathways for young people whose basic life functionings are such that they need a different set of support structures to develop their capabilities to exercise transitional choices into, during, and beyond senior secondary schooling.

Despite such policies spawning many programs, the AIG and the DSF (AIG & DSF, 2007) found recurring issues with youth engagement in learning and attainment of qualifications. This has been reported by MCEETYA (2004, 2009), which notes that even when allowing for differences among assessment regimes, reporting and certification arrangements, young people from low socio-economic backgrounds remain underrepresented in national completion rates. Evidently, ‘It is always crunch time for young adults who are alienated or disaffected from senior secondary schooling which was never designed or intended for them’ (Harreveld & Singh, 2008, p. 222; italics in original).

In this context, it is important to understand the work of state-level leaders who bring their concerns about effective, multiple pathways; diverse and engaging learning experiences; and the relations
among education, training and work, to the analysis of transitions and attainment data as they reconsider equity policy settings.

Summary

The leadership exercised in senior secondary schooling is building the capacity of education and training providers, including in workplaces, to provide socially and economically aligned learning and work opportunities for young Queenslanders. Capacity building strategies have impacted school culture. However, challenges remain for leaders as schools continue to be sites for re/production of in/equality. Leaders of senior secondary schooling reforms are working at an interface that now links them to further education institutions, training providers and workplace employers. These leaders now operate in an environment where multiple agencies have a responsibility for youth attainment and transition. Leaders working within schools and their associated education system are held publicly accountable for these outcomes. This points to a gap in terms of accountability that has yet to be closed.
Chapter 7—Conclusion

This Project has provided knowledge of leaders’ capabilities to positively and proactively shape productive innovations in senior secondary schooling. Through documentation and analysis of the perceptions, experiences and conceptions of leaders working at multiple levels across education, workplace and community sectors, the research has considered differing roles and characteristics of leadership in undertaking this work.

Through a process of analytical theorising developed through this Project, a leadership for twenty-first century senior secondary learning is discernible. Significant markers of this leadership are now presented in the findings that address three key issues: leadership capabilities for pathways and partnerships; implications for policy, systems and education professionals; frontiers of education leadership for the future.

7.1 Capabilities for pathways and partnerships

Leadership capabilities for beneficial policy and education practice are matured through partnerships and pathways instigated and sustained over time.

Capabilities

Leaders’ capabilities are directed towards the development of young people’s capabilities for living safely and well, for acquiring knowledge, and thinking critically about their own and others’ situations in the world. Figure 2 illustrates the interconnectedness of these capabilities when mobilised to provide learning opportunities for young people transitioning into and from senior secondary schooling (Years 10 to 12).

Figure 2: Leadership for cross-sectoral, multi-level, socio-economically aligned learning
Pathways

In the current era, pathways have been created through multi-level (state and national) curriculum initiatives. Australia’s nationalised curriculum strategy has already impacted qualifications (AQF), VET (AQTF) and schools (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority). State curriculum initiatives such as those undertaken by the QSA have provided for a career planning process integrated with an individualised learning profile (the SET Plan commenced in Year 10 and continued throughout Years 11 and 12). The state-level statutory authority (QSA) has also overseen the development of a senior certification process through which credits may be banked up to a period of nine years.

As well, a multi-level policy agenda has been devised and deployed by leaders. Of major significance for this study have been Queensland’s senior phase reforms and the Australian Government’s national partnerships agenda (see Appendix 1). Policy is not solely the domain of government because we have found that non-government agencies and industries have their own policy frameworks, which alternately mesh, intersect and in some instances clash with those of government. Leaders across all sectors of schooling, further education, training and workplaces have to develop a collective capacity within and among their own organisations to make this senior secondary schooling work for young people. To achieve this outcome, we found that education leadership is no longer defined by schooling, either conceptually, chronologically, systemically or sectorally.

This senior secondary schooling is not confined to one sector. It operates across schools that are subsidised by governments yet retain systemic affiliations as state and non-state schools (independent and/or faith-based). It is also undertaken in a range of settings, e.g., training colleges (e.g., RTOs, ERTOs), workplaces, universities, community agencies. Through workplaces, vocational and higher education learning environments, young people are experiencing some of the ever-changing local and global social and economic circumstances of everyday life.

Partnerships

The collective capacity of leadership is practised at these multiple levels across the sectors and systems. Partnerships with these learning providers are conceptualised through the notion that senior secondary schooling is now integrated and socio-economically aligned to provide contextualised learning opportunities. Partnerships are necessary to access physical and financial resources needed to make the pathways work.

Where leaders have successfully established and sustained partnerships, there is evidence of people changing mindsets and work cultures. This is a risky business though because some leaders have grown with the changes, while others have had change thrust upon them. Engaging the disengaged, rebuilding potentially wasted lives, nurturing citizens for our global communities requires capabilities on two levels: (1) the capabilities of leaders to see, share, listen and act in accordance with values of collaboration and inclusivity; and (2) for these same leaders to work together to ensure that young people have the basic functionings of life so as to develop their own capabilities for educational participation, attainment and employment.
This interpretation has been conducted through an analytical framework that foregrounded the concept of capabilities (Sen, 1992 & 1999; Nussbaum, 2010) for the maturation of representative and participatory democracy (Fukuyama, 2004). Implicated in this analysis has been a consideration of dis/engagement and wasted lives of young people at risk in society (Bauman, 2004; Furedi, 2005). This provided for a multi-level analysis of leadership that worked iteratively through successive phases of the education change agenda (Fullan, 2010 a & b).

7.2 Implications

Implications for policy actors, education systems and education professionals can be discerned from these findings.

For policy actors

Future policy frameworks need to be cognisant of and responsive to the multiple levels, sectors and systems in which they will be enacted. There is policy work to be done in mapping the intricate webs of intent and their consequential impact on the lives of educators and young people.

For education systems

School-centric notions of senior secondary schooling education may not be viable in their current constructions. The role of the state is also a consideration because it is already resourcing this education either partially or wholly through a number of different accredited providers and curriculum pathways.

For the education profession

Pre-service teachers need knowledge of senior secondary schooling, its histories, and the stories of leadership such as those reported in this and other research studies. Rich conceptual resources grounded in the practicalities of teaching and learning with young people are also needed as they transition into the profession.

Teachers and teacher educators may consider the larger patterns in this phenomenon of senior secondary leadership. At times, they may stop moving and move to the balcony of reflection to see who is working with whom, in what groups, in what locations, and who is not engaging and why.

7.3 Leadership frontiers

Senior secondary education is remarkably complex and its leadership is conceptually complex too. A review of the literature in Chapter 2 found conceptions of leadership in education to be goal-driven, multi-level, distributive, collegial, values-infused, dialogic, focused on learning and powerful (Day, 2004; Fullan, 2010 a & b; Grove, 2004; Leithwood, Steinbach & Jantz, 2002; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Serviovanni, 2005; West-Burnham, 2004).
The notion of ‘tri-level’ leadership (Fullan, 2003; Fullan & Crevola, 2006) facilitated our examination of school, district and system level transformations as leaders negotiated, engaged and sustained partnership interactions ‘within schools, across schools within districts, across districts and between districts and the state’ (Fullan, 2003, pp. 39-40). Yet that does not account for the complementary individualised nature of leadership, of the charismatic leaders travelling with sometimes one or two trusted colleagues to assist in their pursuit of meaningful curriculum and realistic learning pathways. Usually they are individuals with personal charm, extensive contacts nurtured over time in many diverse contexts. They had developed, or in some instances were developing, finely tuned system-wise antennae through which they led inductively, with no set models or roadmaps but only principles to guide them.

Such leadership needs more than a ‘tri-level’ systems interpretation because the systems themselves were at different times penetrated and mobilised through coalitions of education’s many ‘tribes of schools’ (public, private, denominational, alternative non-state), institutes, training organisations and universities. An inter-systemic notion of leadership as distributed, requires multiple individuals taking responsibility and leadership forming in the contextualised interactions among leaders and ‘followers’ (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). This goes part of the way towards explaining our findings; namely, that context counts and that while seeking leadership, there may also be a complementary project investigating ‘followers’. In this reasoning, ‘followers’ are necessary for leaders to exercise leadership.

Weber (1947) engaged with this issue in his sociological examination of the principal characteristics of charismatic authority and its relation to forms of communal organisation, noting that ‘what is alone important is how the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by his [sic] ‘followers’ or ‘disciples’ (p. 359). His analysis constructed three types of authority, all of which are implicated in these findings: charismatic authority (not rule-bound but duty-bound to its community); bureaucratic authority (rule-bound); and traditional authority (bound to past precedents (Weber, 1947, pp. 361-362). From this project’s evidence, leadership in senior secondary schooling was imbued variously with a certain charisma, respect for tradition, and cognisance of bureaucracy’s authority.

Such leadership was not that of the individual hero (Lear, 2006) leading the ‘education tribes’ bravely through unremitting change. However it did require individual courage to grasp opportunities when they occurred. Chen and Singh (2010) constructed the concept of Li ti leadership in recognition of the multi-dimensions to the shifting, merging and sometimes dissolving boundaries between individuals, levels, systems and sectors involved in senior secondary education. It is this three-dimensional, dynamic depiction of leadership that emerged through this Project.

At the frontiers of twenty-first century learning, leadership will be rejuvenated through multi-dimensional, cross-sectoral, inter-systemic, socially and economically alignments. Global and local environmental, socio-cultural and economic issues will continue to impact directly and indirectly on an often contradictory and sometimes confusing mélange of national, state, local and institutional level policies, management, pedagogical and curriculum interests.
Summary

This Report has presented an empirically grounded and theoretically informed study of the journey so far in senior secondary schooling with a focus on leaders closing the gap in youth attainment and transitions. It has investigated leadership capacities for engaging with and responding to education reform agenda; the brokerage of transition pathways and learning providers for learning contexts; innovative conceptual frameworks; and an inductive/deductive research approach beneficial for examining this complex case of senior secondary schooling leadership.

In particular, it has found leaders:

1. Devising curriculum and transition pathways into and from senior secondary schooling.
2. Building capacity at multiple levels within systems and across sectors to facilitate productive learning for young people.
3. Mobilising and sustaining partnerships to achieve educational opportunities for all young people.

Through a sustained literature review and theoretically informed research approach this case study has identified leaders changing school culture through curriculum renewal; building capacity through people, partnerships and pathways; closing the gap in young people’s attainments of qualifications, and positioning them for transitioning successfully into further education, training or work.

Research is a creative process contributing to knowledge production. This research has contributed conceptually to further understandings of resource-based capacity building and results-focused accountability; and the capabilities of leaders for leadership. It has advanced our knowledge of innovative leadership’s capacities for challenging school-centric views of senior secondary learning now and in the future.
References


## Appendix 1: Historically significant policies and influences on education and training

### Table 6: Historically significant policies and influences on education and training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year, policy publication</th>
<th>Significance influence on education and training</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2002</strong> Education reforms announced</td>
<td>Green and White Papers recognised the changing nature of young people, the labour market and international trends in education and training and suggested changing through creation of post-compulsory education and training systems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stepping Forward: Improving Pathways for all Young People (MCEETYA, 2002)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stepping Forward Action Plan (MCEETYA, 2002)</td>
<td>Action plan for young people focused on local partnerships and strategic alliances and established education and training as the foundation for effective transition for all young people. Stepping Forward plan identified initiatives that address the needs of vulnerable young people. It focused on developing practical options to strengthen transition pathways for young people who are disconnected or at risk.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2003</strong> Youth Participation in Education and Training Act 2003 (Queensland Government, 2003)</td>
<td>ETRF taskforce established for intersectional advice on senior phase implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2004</strong> Joint Ministerial Statement: Future Directions for Vocational Education and Training in Queensland Schools</td>
<td>The policy focused on broadening the range of vocational education within schools and increasing the participation of students in post-compulsory education.</td>
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</table>
### Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting (QCAR) Framework

Year 12 Outcomes Reports introduced in 2005

QCAR informs the learning programs for all state school students in Years 1 to 9.

### Education (General Provisions) Act 2006

New laws require all students 16 to 18 years to be learning.

- Supports young people remaining in education or training until the age of 17.
- Makes available to each Queensland child or young person a high-quality education.
- Ensures education programs are responsive to the individual needs of children and young people.

### P–12 Curriculum Framework

The P–12 Curriculum Framework is an over-arching framework that captures all curriculum requirements from Prep to Year 12.

### Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) was introduced

The QCE is Queensland's senior school qualification, which is awarded to eligible students usually at the end of Year 12. The QCE recognises broad learning options and offers flexibility in what, where and when learning occurs.

### Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008)

Melbourne Declaration sets two educational goals for the next 10 years.

### Toward Q2 (Queensland Government, 2008)

Toward Q2 stress on technological advancements and increase global competition for new knowledge place a higher premium on skilled workers into the future.

### National literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN) tests commenced

### Masters Review Report released

Masters Review Report made five recommendations to improve teaching and assessment of literacy, numeracy and science in primary schools.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Leaders Closing the Gap in Youth Attainment and Transitions</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Closing the Gap Indigenous Education Strategy</strong> <em>(Queensland Government, 2009)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>National Partnership Agreement for Youth Attainment and Transitions (NPYAT)</strong> <em>(COAG, July, 2009)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2010 Strategic Plan 2010–2014</strong> <em>(Queensland Government, 2010)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2011 New Australian curriculum to be phased in from 2012</strong></td>
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