

To Learn or Earn?

Policy and practice for raising educational attainment

Dr Kitty te Riele

Education

Faculty of Arts &

Social Sciences

UTS


Kitty.teriele@uts.edu.au

Overview

This presentation will:

1. Provide background to the **2009 CoAG target** for raising educational attainment
2. Discuss **parallel complexity**: what it is, what to do about it, and why that is worthwhile
3. Discuss **sequential complexity**: what it is, what to do about it, and why that is worthwhile
4. Argue for **collaboration and integration** in policy & practice.

1.1 Historical targets		 UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY
1987	Commonwealth Schools Commission (<i>In the National Interest</i>) 65% retention to Year 12 by 1992 <i>Target reached by 1991</i>	
1991	Australian Education Council Review Committee (the <i>Finn Report</i>) 95% of 19-year-olds to have completed Year 12, or an initial post-school qualification, or be in formally recognised education or training by 2001 <i>Target not reached</i> (about 83% of 19 year olds met at least one of those options in 2000)	
2009	Council of Australian Governments National Partnership agreement on youth attainment and transitions 90% Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate by 2015	

1.2 CoAG measurement		 UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY
CoAG National Partnership agreement measurement of the increase in educational attainment:		
• Young people aged 20-24		✓
• Year 12 certificate or equivalent		✓
• Equivalent is defined as AQF certificate II		✗

1.3 CoAG targets



Aim to increase attainment of Year 12 or equivalent from 84% in 2007 to 90% nationally by 2015:

→ **92,527 extra** across Australia

Targets vary from state to state:

ACT	from 93.1% to 95.0%	526	additional young people
VIC	from 86.1% to 92.6%	23,874	additional young people
QLD	from 86.0% to 92.5%	18,902	additional young people
NSW	from 82.7% to 89.2%	30,200	additional young people
WA	from 79.7% to 86.2%	9,516	additional young people
SA	from 78.2% to 85.7%	6,864	additional young people
TAS	from 75.1% to 81.6%	2,060	additional young people
NT	from 64.1% to 75.6%	586	additional young people



1.4 CoAG funding



Total package of National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions: **\$623 million**

Including:

- \$ 47,139 National Career Development
- \$286,000 Youth Connections facilitation
- \$106,400 Maximising Engagement, Attainment and Successful Transitions
- \$182,880 School Business Community partnership broker facilitation

Plus **\$100,000,000**
Reward funding for achieving targets



1.5 Objection



But what about ‘**credential inflation**’?

When only 35% completed Year 12 (1980) that diploma was **much more valuable** than once 75% completed (since about 2002).

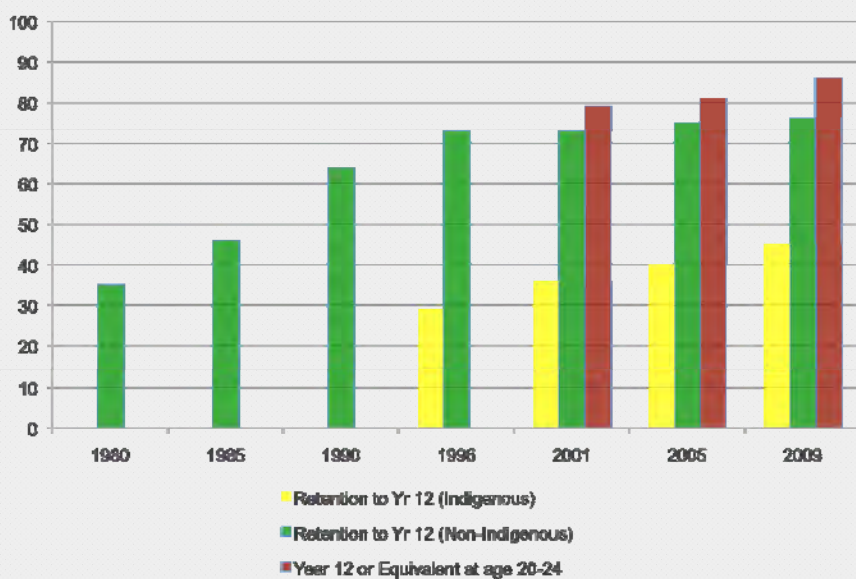
Flipside:

Not having Year 12 or an equivalent is now also **much more of a disadvantage** than 30 years ago.

So:

This presentation **will not** argue against the overall aim of increasing educational attainment.

1.6 ‘Glass ceiling’ effect?



1.7 Complexities



This presentation argues that:

To enable reaching the CoAG target, two types of **complexities** in young people's lives need to be recognised and supported:

Parallel complexities ('jigsaw')

le. teenagers while at school

Sequential complexities ('detours')

le. teenagers and young people after leaving school

2.1 Parallel complexity – what is it?



A common assumption: teenager = school student

But – instead they experience a complex jigsaw:

“School is more than books and assignments. [...] Being able to **balance** your school commitments with social, recreational and family life is important for a happy and healthy lifestyle.”

(NSW DET website, 2008)

“Young people, both as teenagers and as young adults, are required to put all the pieces into place and to find the answers to **life's jigsaw** using their own devices.”

(Spierings, 1999: 7)

2.2 Two major jigsaw pieces



Juggling school & work

53% of 15-19 year olds
combine part-time work with full time school (Vickers, 2009: 2)

56% of 12-16 year olds
combine part-time work (incl. unpaid) with full time school
(NSW Commission for Children & Young People, 2005: 2)

15-19 year olds exceed **40 hours p/w** in productive activities
(Australian Government, 2010: 4)

“For many high school students working part-time is a normal aspect of their **hectic lives**, which needs to be **fit in** amongst school, study, sporting activities and family commitments” (NSW DET website, 2008)



2.3 Supporting the school-work jigsaw



Education

- Broad & flexible participation options
- Inter-sectoral cooperation (schools-VET-university)
- Genuinely enable part-time senior secondary schooling
- Communicate with employers
- School-based employment

Employment

- Communicate with education providers
- Generate jobs for youth in disadvantaged areas
- Protect young people at work

2.4 Genuine support for the 'jigsaw'



This is worth doing because:

- School students who have a part-time job are **65% more likely** to gain an apprenticeship and **45% more likely** to gain full-time work after leaving. (Vickers, Lamb & Hinkley, 2003: 17)
- Young people **enjoy** part-time work as an opportunity to exercise **autonomy** and develop **skills**. (NSW Commission for Children & Young People, 2005: 9)
- Young people **contribute \$50 billion** to gross national income (Australian Government, 2010: 4)
- One of the key features identified by the OECD as contributing to a **successful transition** from education to work for young people is: "workplace experience combined with education" (in AIG/DSF, 2007: 19)

3.1 Sequential complexity – what is it?



A common assumption: linear, one-way, hierarchical progression

"The term 'transition to adulthood' draws on the idea that young people make one transition to adulthood, and that adulthood is a clearly defined status – a destination at which one **'arrives'**." (Wyn and White 1997: 96)

But – a significant minority leaves 'the road most travelled'

"the ups and downs of **fragile and reversible** transitions" (EGRIS, 2001: 104)

Experience of trajectories as

"complex and interconnected, as involving **false starts and redefined possibilities**, as requiring negotiation and redefinitions".

(Looker and Dwyer, 1998: 17)

3.2 Diverse trajectories, u-turns and detours



“Schooling should offer a range of pathways to meet the **diverse needs and aspirations** of all young Australians”.

(National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, MCEETYA, 2008: 12)

24% of young people leave school before Year 12 (ABS, 2009 – 4221.0)

16% of 20-24 year olds don't have Year 12 / Cert. II VET (ABS, 2009 – 6227.0)

Reasons for leaving education & training:

- Need to earn income
- Pregnancy / Parenting
- Recently arrived migrants
- Bullying
- Behavioural difficulties
- Juvenile justice
- Learning difficulties
- Illness / Disability
- Geographic isolation
- Homelessness

3.3 Supporting detours



“Pathways must be open for students to easily return to the system. It is as important to make **‘coming back’** an easy and viable option as is it to retain them.” (School staff in NSW DET 2005: 101)

Range of trajectories

- Welcome returning students & ongoing support
- Use technology (eg. Interactive Distance E-Learning)
- Support for ‘re-entry’ programs

Navigation support

- Transition advice
- Mentoring
- Interagency collaboration

3.4 Authentic options for 'detours'



This is worth doing because:

- Retention to Year 12 has leveled off since the mid 1990s – **alternative pathways** are needed to further increase educational attainment.
- Estimate: increase in young people completing Year 12 or Certificate III from 81% to 90% would expand the economy by **\$2.5billion** within 2 decades to what it would otherwise have been. (BCA, 2003: 13)
- Not only would **individual** living standards improve, but **business** would have more access to skilled employees and the **community** would have lower costs associated with welfare, crime and poor health. (see BCA 2003)

4.1 Action and chaos



There is much each individual person or organisation can do:

“With commitment and hard work—from children and young people and their parents, carers and families, from schools, teachers, communities, business and all Australian governments—all young Australians will be provided with the opportunity to reach their full potential.” (National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, MCEETYA, 2008: 18)

But:

The result of multiple initiatives at local, regional, State and Commonwealth levels is a **bewildering array of projects**, rather than the **integrated and comprehensive transition support system** envisaged by the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001).

4.2 Collaborative action



To make it really work – young people need **all of us** to collaborate!

“Young people see their lives as a whole [...] the separate areas of a person’s life have an impact on each other and the whole. [...]

The whole-person-whole-life perspective is important”

(Australian Government, 2010: 4)

Inspired by:

- Full service schools (funded by DETYA, 1999-2000)
- National Youth Commitment (championed by Dusseldorp Skills Forum)
- Innovation and Continuous Improvement Model (NSW DET, 2009: 8, 85)
- Local Learning and Employment Networks (Victoria)
- Regional Development Australia (RDA, 2009)
- Intergenerational Youth Compact (Proposed by Australian National Schools Network, 2009)

4.3 Single point of access



4.4 Promising policy context



National Strategy for Young Australians

Released by Kate Ellis & Kevin Rudd, 14 April 2010

Relevant Priorities:

2. Equipping young Australians to shape their own futures through education;
4. Empowering young Australians to take part and be active in their communities;
5. Equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks they need to gain, and be successful in, employment;
7. Strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent any problems getting worse and help young people get their lives back on track.

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Thank you!



Questions & Comments

Kitty te Riele

UTS Research Strength in Learning and Change
Associate Director (Research), Australian Centre for Child and Youth
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (Education)

kitty.teriele@uts.edu.au