

# ***Report of the Enquiry into Immediate Post-compulsory Education*** ***Volume 1***

South Australia. Education Department, 1988 (Chair: K. R. Gilding)

## **Overview of the document**

143 page first volume of a report which provides 104 recommendations on the effects of matriculation and of selective admission procedures for institutions of higher education on curriculum patterns in senior secondary schooling, and desirable patterns of curriculum for senior schooling. The second volume comprises 13 appendices of supplementary material; and a second report published in 1989 concerns the implementation of the recommendations.

## **Keywords**

Post-compulsory schooling; curriculum patterns; assessment; certification; pathways; TAFE; higher education.

## **Terms of Reference**

The Enquiry will be required to investigate and report upon:

1. The effects on curriculum patterns in senior secondary schooling of matriculation and other entry requirements and of selective admission procedures for institutions of higher education. With respect to this matter particular attention should be given to –
  - addressing the number of subjects presently required for matriculation, the modes of their assessment, the period of time over which they may be gained, the groupings of subjects from which matriculating scores may be calculated, and the scaling and aggregation of subject scores for the purposes of selection for admission to higher education.
  - addressing the effects on curriculum patterns of current policies and practices regarding prerequisite subjects and assumed knowledge both in schools and in institutions of higher education and in this context noting any effects of higher education admission requirements on the school curriculum in years preceding the senior school.
2. Desirable patterns of curriculum for senior schooling, having regard to those years as a period of education in its own right and as a period for preparation for higher and further education and employment. With respect to this matter particular attention should be given to –
  - desirable entry and selection procedures for further and higher education institutions which relate to desirable patterns of senior secondary curriculum.
  - the desirability and practicality of providing subject and course offerings which can readily be related to each other and to multiple possible outcomes in higher and further education and employment.
  - ways to encourage young people to continue their studies beyond the years of compulsory schooling.
  - the need to increase opportunities for students from a wide range of backgrounds to undertake tertiary education.
  - the desirability of establishing generally recognised goals for the senior secondary years, while noting that many young people leave and re-enter formal education during the immediate post-compulsory years and that completion of secondary education is not now marked by the same or a single end-point for all students.

- the nature of the relationships between secondary schools and TAFE and higher education institutions and the extent to which the resources of each can be used in the provision of desirable patterns of curriculum.
  - curriculum patterns which enhance the development of skills in the use of the English language.
3. The implications of current and any projected senior secondary curriculum patterns for courses and structures in tertiary education, in particular for the structure and length of basic, honours and professional degree courses in higher education.
  4. The desirability and practicality of including a demonstration of satisfactory performance in English expression as a requirement for admission to institutions of higher education.
  5. Resources required to implement any proposals arising from the Enquiry.

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### **Summary of Contents**

#### **CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE ENQUIRY**

##### **The Origins of the Enquiry**

- Notes that there are two main areas of investigation: the set of arrangements under which young people qualify and are selected to enter higher education; and the total framework for the immediate post-compulsory education years. (p. 1)
- Notes that the present Enquiry was set up following the report of the 1986 Committee to Review Tertiary Entrance Requirements that had been prompted by university proposals to change matriculation requirements. Notes that there has been a high level of community concern “about the whole set of arrangements for education in the years immediately following compulsory education” and comments on changes in economic and social structures “that have undermined known patterns by which young people were inducted into adult life and the adult working world even a generation ago”, and the practical and philosophical questions raised by changing attitudes towards what is regarded as worthwhile knowledge. (p. 1)
- Notes that there is concern that Years 11 and 12 are providing neither adequate preparation for university studies nor serving well those not seeking university studies. (p. 2)

- Discusses recent reports which resulted in substantial changes to secondary education in other States, and apposite material published under the auspices of the Commonwealth Government and other bodies.
- In regards to the report's emphasis, notes the following:
  - In these investigations there is clear emphasis on education's contribution to the economic life of Australia.
  - Directions for change broadly relate to the relationship between general education and preparation to gain a living.
  - The separation of theoretical and practical studies at school traditionally followed the following division: studies preparatory to university entrance were largely theoretically based; and practical studies contained little in the way of theoretical understandings.
  - Assumptions behind these divisions still influence the secondary curriculum, even though "Both aspects of knowledge are seen under modern conditions as being essential for all young people in order to equip them to take full part as adults both in the economy and in society generally." (p. 3)
  - So, there is a change in thinking that would see many more young people take part in five years of secondary education and programs characterised by "flexible combinations of practical and theoretical studies and in which the beginning of occupational preparation was accompanied by a broad and general educational experience." (p. 3)

### **The Context of the Enquiry**

- Notes that before the 1960s the connection between schooling and what happened next in a person's life was reasonably predictable in South Australia (i.e. the Intermediate Certificate at age 15 led to apprenticeships or unskilled/semi-skilled occupations; the Leaving Certificate at age 16 led to white collar occupations; and Leaving Honours at age 17 led to university studies).
- Notes that new matriculation procedures were introduced in 1966 to allow for selection to particular faculties and that since the abolition of the Intermediate and Leaving examinations (1968 and 1974) the only publicly recognisable nexus between school and occupational futures was with those served by higher education. (p. 5)
- Notes that over the 1970s and 1980s there have been a number of social and economic changes that have combined to create complex and difficult pressures for the education system including: the significant number of families with non-English speaking backgrounds, providing South Australia with a particularly rich and diverse language profile, and requiring of the education system support for language and culture maintenance; changes in Aboriginal communities, with public policy respecting a degree of self-determination and full participation in multicultural Australia; the changing roles of women; advancing technology leading to radical changes in the structure of the workforce; changes to the structure of work, with a shift to more vulnerable short and fixed-term employment contracts; and economic trends.
- Notes that some of these factors are reflected in South Australia's Equal Opportunities legislation and the State Government's Social Justice Strategy of 1987.
- Notes that in response to the two themes of equity and economic well-being, the Report of Enquiry emphasises the need to create structures to provide for all young

people the educational services to enable them to take part fully and productively in modern society. (pp. 6-7)

- States that “A particular concern is the measure of support available to young people to continue their education” (p. 7) and notes the establishment of a Task Force looking into provision of income support to young people.
- Recommends the following:
  - Recommendation 1: “That the South Australian Government support the changes recommended in this Report.” (p. 7)
  - Recommendation 2: “That increased participation in schooling to the end of Year 12 be actively encouraged.” (p. 7)
  - Recommendation 3: “That the South Australian Government press the Commonwealth to vary its provisions for financial support of young people so that continued participation for all may be made possible to the point of successful completion of immediate post-compulsory education.” (p. 7)

## **CHAPTER 2: HOW THE ENQUIRY WAS CONDUCTED**

- Provides details on the setting up and carrying out of the Enquiry.

## **CHAPTER 3: CURRICULUM PATTERNS**

### **Preamble**

- Notes that The Report of the Quality of Education Review Committee suggests that education should serve at least five functions: the development of the capacities of the individual, including cognitive and affective skills; the socialisation of the individual; the caring for the young before they become full members of the society; the providing of individuals with the knowledge, skills and qualities need for work, and the sorting and guidance of individual; and the transmission, conservation and extension of knowledge, including the cultural heritage. (p. 12)
- Notes that the first three functions are more important at the compulsory stage, the last two during the post-compulsory years of secondary schooling, but that such division should not be taken too programmatically.
- Notes that over the past 20 years in South Australia, more young people have been studying at school longer and as a consequence, the Secondary School Certificate was introduced in the 1970 as an alternative to the Matriculation Certificate to help schools with approaches to learning and teaching for students not wishing to matriculate. (p. 14)
- Notes that in 1984 the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA) took over the matriculation certificate and now issues a single Year 12 certificate and the subjects at Year 12 are accredited according to two categories: publicly examined subjects (PES) and school assessed subjects (SAS). Notes that the PES group is a declining proportion: in 1987 nearly half of Year 12 students undertook courses other than traditional matriculation. (p. 14)
- Summarises the problems associated with the present arrangements as follows:
  - Studies not leading to higher education are not widely regarded as having a status equal to PES.
  - The post-compulsory years are neither seen nor planned as a coherent whole.
  - Fragmentation of the curriculum in Years 11 and 12 means that there are only de facto rules for students undertaking studies, and fulfilling so-called

matriculation requirements remains the only publicly acceptable end of senior secondary schooling.

- In relation to courses acceptable for higher education entry, a high degree of specialisation leads to a narrow curriculum.
- There is no notion that all young people should take an integrated pattern of studies both to expand their general education and to provide a broadly based preparation for entry into employment and further and higher education.

### **What was said about curriculum patterns**

- Notes the following in relation to the submissions:
  - Many submissions discussed in general terms the rationale behind a curriculum for students in the post-compulsory sector; questions were raised as to how a curriculum could provide a “broad general education” as well as “in-depth study”, enabling every student to develop as a “whole person”; a curriculum framework spanning Years 11 and 12 with a semester system was supported by most; and a compulsory core ensuring a “broad general education” for all students, whether with a framework offering choice from a number of designated areas, or regarding some subjects as “highly desirable”, was favoured by many. (p. 16)
  - Three major curriculum clusters were discernable: a cluster revolving around the English language; a cluster focussing upon quantitative analysis, computational skills and experimental methods; and a cluster with a central theme of individual development.
  - Some submissions suggested using the International Baccalaureate as a model, or the Swedish system. (p. 17)
  - Two major themes connected with the need for a cohesive curriculum during the years of post-compulsory schooling were: the strongly held belief that the present Year 11 and 12 curriculum is pitched largely at the tertiary student; and that there is emphasis on content at the expense of process. (p. 17)
  - A large number of submissions favoured the introduction of student negotiated learning, which in turn was related to the need for flexibility as an element in post-compulsory education. (p. 18)
- Discusses the working parties. Notes that the Curriculum Patterns Working Party underwrote the notion of specialisation within a broad general education, suggesting the concept of balance as the central principle and in summary commented that “A broad education for all, which incorporates vocational preparation in the widest sense, is rapidly becoming a social as well as an economic imperative.” Notes that the Course Articulation Working Party came to similar conclusions, stressing the development of a “cohesive, co-ordinated framework” which “keeps options open as long as possible.” (p. 19)
- Discusses the data-gathering program and notes that it revealed a view that suggested fragmentation within the educational experience, “that within the program of the individual student a number of subjects are studied, with little connection between them and no guiding rationale for the whole program.” (p. 20)
- Notes that employers’ comments were diverse, with a general expectation expressed for literacy and numeracy skills adequate to operate in their businesses.
- Notes that there is a strong desire for a common pattern of studies, and to redress the leap in workload and academic demand between Years 10 to 11 and Years 11 to 12.

- Presents a two year pattern of 22 semester units and notes that a 12 semester scheme for Stage 2 was also promoted by respondents.
- Recommends the following:
  - Recommendation 4: “That there be clear and common rules for all students undertaking studies during this time through the establishment of a recognised curriculum during the immediate post-compulsory years which would:
    - ensure access for all young people and re-entrants to the domains of knowledge and experiences which enable and enrich participation in Australian society; and
    - both expand their general education and provide a broadly based preparation for entry into employment and higher education.” (p. 21)
  - Recommendation 5: “That from the beginning of 1989 post-compulsory secondary education be regarded as a 2 year (or equivalent) phase in its own right and be planned as a coherent, co-ordinated set of experiences.” (p. 22)
  - Recommendation 6: “That:
    - a generalised curriculum pattern of 22 units be adopted for Stages 1 and 2 of the common two year pattern; but
    - this be dependent on further consultation on and a report on the desirability of an increase in the number of units in Stage 2 of the two year program.” (p. 23)
- Notes that there are three possible approaches by which a curriculum pattern may provide a coherent, co-ordinated set of experiences across the two year program, viz., by: setting out a coherent set of pedagogical principles to guide immediate post-compulsory studies; identifying common learnings to be acquired across the curriculum without imposing any compulsory studies or patterns of study; or specifying a required pattern of subjects with either compulsory subjects or compulsory selection from designated areas of study.
- Discusses balance, semesters and common learning and recommends the following:
  - Recommendation 7: “That all existing Year 12 units be reviewed by the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA) to determine whether an appropriate balance has been struck between
    - content and process
    - applied and theoretical knowledge
    - individual differences and common features
    - teacher responsibility and student responsibility
    - vocational and general emphases.” (p. 25)
  - Recommendation 8: “That, if appropriate, curricular construction be in units of a semester’s duration in order to provide a more flexible basis for the combination of studies required for completion of secondary education.” (p. 25)
  - Recommendation 9: “That each unit within the total curriculum include, as appropriate, skills and processes which are regarded as essential learnings for all young people in the post-compulsory age group.” (p. 26)
- Discusses curriculum patterns and notes there is considerable support for the third approach, that is, “a recognised curriculum pattern which will introduce all students in varying ways to significant knowledge and skills, taking account of both their common needs and special interests.” (p. 26)

- Discusses the pattern of studies model, emphasising two points: the desirability of lessening the element of compulsion; and its compatibility with the current increasing emphasis on education as a tool to improve Australia's international competitiveness, including discussion of the constraining influence of mathematics and science on the curriculum generally and on student choice within it.
- Recommends the following:
  - Recommendation 10: That school systems, tertiary institutions and the SSABSA establish a curricular project in the area of mathematics (four specific goals of such a project are itemised). (p. 28)
- Notes that "In summary, the Enquiry is of the view that studies which may reasonably be required within post-compulsory schooling will enable students to use the English language effectively...; have confidence in the use of qualitative and quantitative skills...; [and] develop an appreciation of the nature, values, processes and 'unfinished business' of Australian society." Presents the proposed pattern in a diagram. (p. 29)
- Recommends the following:
  - Recommendation 11: That the 22 unit curriculum provided during senior secondary schooling contain as components: 4 semester units of studies concerned with the use of English; 3 semester units of Arts/Humanities/ Social and Cultural studies, including 1 unit of Australian Studies; and 5 semester units concerned with Mathematics/Science/Technology. (p. 29)
- Discusses components of the curriculum, both those that are required studies and those which should inform the curriculum more generally and makes the following recommendations:
  - Recommendations 12-13 relating to the study of work in society.
  - Recommendations 14-15 relating to Australian Studies.
  - Recommendations 16-17 relating to literacy.
  - Recommendations 18-20 relating to English in use.
  - Recommendations 21-22 relating to quantitative reasoning in use.
- Briefly discusses the difficulties in categorising studies.

## **CHAPTER 4: ASSESSMENT IN CONTEXT**

### **Preamble**

- Notes that the examination mode has been the principal means of assessing performance of young people in their studies until recently and that its drawbacks include: its suitability only to a narrow form of learning; and its remoteness from the learning/teaching situation, leading to a distorting effect on the curriculum. (p. 40)
- Notes that even since the advent of the SSABSA and the introduction of new approaches to assessment, "there has...been maintenance of assessment modes distinguished in terms of their ends, e.g., higher education entry, rather than as tools best fitted to describe student mastery of the curriculum." (p. 41)

### **What was said about assessment?**

- Notes the following in relation to submissions that addressed assessment directly:
  - Broadening assessment procedures: Many teachers suggested criterion-based assessment might be an appropriate substitute for rating students by a single criterion of marks or grades. The focus of current assessment procedures on knowledge of content as opposed to skills and processes was pointed out and it was argued that essential learnings in the area of skills and processes needed

to be identified, and achievement of measurable skill and process competencies assessed as well as content. (p. 41)

- Dismantling the PES/SAS distinction: A view frequently voiced was that school assessed subjects (SAS) should be regarded as equal to publicly examined subjects (PES), and that tertiary institutions should not rely on the current SAS/PES distinction. (p. 42)
- Public examinations: Many favoured “only a component of the overall assessment of a subject taking the form of a public examination”. (p. 42)
- School-based assessment: School-based assessment was seen as “an intrinsic part of assessment”, with external moderation at Year 12 level, but not at Year 11. (p. 43)
- Assessment stress: Respondents argued that ways should be found to reduce excessive stress, while some thought a reasonable degree of pressure was fair. (p. 43)
- Reducing assessment pressure: It was argued that assessment pressure could be reduced by broadening assessment procedures, removing the emphasis on content and dismantling the SAS/PES subject division. A more flexible timeframe to enable students to cover work over several years, and “redeemability”, were also promoted. (p. 44)
- Administering assessment: in terms of SSABSA’s role. (p. 44)

#### **For the future: the Enquiry’s recommendations**

- Notes that “In the remainder of this chapter, principles of curriculum construction for immediate post-compulsory education are discussed... and recommendations are put forward to promote...building assessment into curriculum design as an integral feature rather than a set of external constraints.” (p. 45)
- Argues that studies during this period should:
  - relate to, recognise and expand students’ skills and experience;
  - enable students to specialise in accordance with their interests and needs as well as deal with those issues that affect all young people;
  - attach value to the experience of all groups and therefore include experience of those traditionally under-represented in post-compulsory education;
  - be structured to enable inclusive access for students from all groups;
  - reflect defensible learning theories;
  - combine a range of learning and teaching methodologies, including both practical and theoretical approaches, which foster high-order thinking and skilful applications of knowledge addressed;
  - create opportunities for enquiries which are broad-ranging and integrative as well as for research which is systematic and in-depth;
  - inform students at the outset of the work required and of the assessment criteria by which achievement will be described;
  - involve students in the planning and timing of their course work and in reflection on their learning; and
  - be assessed in ways which contribute to realisation of their aims. (pp. 45-46)
- Discusses assessment in context and resources and recommends the following:
  - Recommendation 23: “That the principles set out in paragraph 4.20 inform curriculum construction for studies during post-compulsory schooling.” (p. 46)

- Recommendation 24: “That assessment be viewed as an integral part of the whole teaching/learning process.” (p. 46)
- Recommendation 25: “That the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia Act, 1983 be amended to specify clearly the responsibility of the Board to foster studies which serve the whole of the relevant age cohort and which encourage further participation by those who have left the education system...” (p. 47)
- Recommendation 26. “That the SSABSA...continue to explore a range of assessment modes to support a curriculum designed to offer suitably demanding educational programs...and in doing so take account of the need to maintain public credibility.” (p. 48)
- Recommendation 27: That in the meantime the three different systems of SSABSA assessment continue.
- Recommendation 28: “That subjects accredited by the SSABSA no longer be classified according to the presence or absence of an examination component in their assessment, but rather by the characteristics of their syllabuses (e.g. “English PES” could become “English Literature”, “English SAS” “English Expression”.” (p. 48)
- Recommendation 29: “That institutions of higher education be encouraged to specify subjects on the relevance of their syllabuses towards tertiary study, rather than on the presence or absence of a public examination component.” (p. 48)
- Discusses resources and following discussion stressing the expertise required in the devising of a curriculum in which students with their teachers adopt a program of skill development and knowledge acquisition, concludes that matters on two fronts need addressing: concerted efforts should be made to expand the curriculum leadership available in South Australia; and personnel policies affecting teachers should make it clear how centrally important they are to successful educational outcomes for students. (p. 50)
- Makes Recommendations 30 to 33 regarding matters of teacher promotion, transfer, placement and recruitment, funding and exchanges. (pp. 50-51)

## **CHAPTER 5: CERTIFICATION**

### **Preamble**

- Promotes a mode of certification which affirms that studies undertaken in a secondary school program are worthwhile and that students have performed in them in ways worth recognising. (p. 52)

### **What was said about certification**

- Notes that support for a single certifying authority for secondary education was virtually unanimous but that there was less unanimity as to whether there should be a certificate of completion of secondary education and whether that should replace or be concurrent with a certificate of achievement. (p. 53)

### **For the future: the Enquiry’s recommendations**

- Offers an explanation for a South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE), “broadly designed and capable within that design of recognising achievements of young people from the whole range of cultural backgrounds and physical capabilities,

which would be available to all and be also a prior requirement for entry to institutions of higher education...for those who do not complete SACR requirements, it would be important to make available on application by a student a transcript of results.” (p. 55)

- Argues that SSABSA, not individual schools, is the appropriate body to make such an award. (p. 56)
- Makes the following recommendations:
  - Recommendation 34: That the completion of the agreed pattern of studies be marked by the award of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE).
  - Recommendation 35: That the SACE be awarded by SSABSA.
  - Recommendation 36: That the SACE record on the highest level of achievement gained in units attempted more than once, but that a transcript of results be available upon application by the student.
  - Recommendation 37: That the SACE be a requirement for entry to institutions of higher education.
  - Recommendation 38: That a transcript of results be available on application by a student who has not completed all SACE requirements.
  - Recommendation 39: That school achievement records also continue to be available. (p. 56)
  - Recommendations 40-44 relating to the requirements for the certificate. (pp. 59-60)
  - Recommendations 45-48 relating to mitigating areas of potential disadvantage. (pp. 60-61)
  - Recommendations 49-52 relating to the implementation and management of SACE. (pp. 62-63)

## **CHAPTER 6: PATHWAYS**

### **Part A: Schools and Technical Further Education**

- States that “Clearly, the kind of fundamental re-framing of secondary education outlined in this Report has substantial implications for the relationship between technical and further education (TAFE) and schooling.” (p. 64)
- Argues that in the relationship between schooling and TAFE, two issues arise: (1) whether TAFE services should be developed principally as programs for entry from a completed secondary education or in some case as programs parallel with those in senior secondary school; and (2) whether and how there can be developed a closer alignment of studies in senior secondary schooling and those in TAFE, with formal recognition accorded to each by the other. (p. 65)
- Recommends the following:
  - Recommendation 53: “That post-compulsory secondary education be the responsibility of the school systems, continuing roles being take by TAFE and industry-based training schemes for the minority who opt out of senior secondary education between 15-18.” (p. 69)
  - Recommendations 54-57: That arrangements be made to increase co-ordination between accredited providers and the provision of training programs.
  - Recommendations 58-63 concerning the transition from school to work and further study, with emphasis on pre-employment education and the development of ‘generic vocational skills’ being provided in schools. (p. 70)

- Recommendations 64-69 concerning the desirability of cross-crediting between certifying authorities whose provisions overlap, particularly of some SACE studies and some TAFE certificate work. (pp. 71-73)
- Recommendations 73-76 concerning the transition from TAFE to higher education. (pp. 73-76)

### **Part B: Schools and Higher Education**

- Notes that aspects of this topic discussed include the need to change higher education selection procedures to address: the perceived unfair and discriminatory nature of the single aggregate; the perceived mismatch between secondary and higher education; inherent unfairness in examination procedures; high first year attrition rates; and the influence of higher education institutions on senior secondary curriculum.
- Outlines four basic models for higher education selection. (p. 80)
- Notes that the Enquiry's recommendations encompass three approaches: (1) Study in higher education institutions is only one destination for senior secondary school students; (2) Proposals for improving the admission and selection processes should be a joint effort by both schools and higher education institutions; and (3) Other methods of selecting students for post-secondary education should be investigated.
- Under those approaches, recommends the following:
  - Recommendation 75: That higher education selection criteria be determined and maintained in such a way as to: minimise detrimental effects on the school curriculum; and provide as much curriculum flexibility as is consistent with other principles. (p. 80)
  - Recommendations 76-77 in regards to point 2. (p. 83)
  - Recommendations 78-79 suggesting that institutions of higher education delay selection until the end of a student's first year of tertiary study, or that a bridging year following completion of SACE be considered. (p. 85)
- Also recommends the following:
  - Recommendation 80: "That the higher education institutions move away from relying on a single aggregate score in selection and towards developing a selection process which achieves a better match between young people and their desired fortune." (p. 86)
  - Recommendation 81: "That a working party review the scaling process with a view to providing a basis for ensuring comparability between subjects which is objectively fair and capable of public justification." (p. 86)
  - Recommendation 83 relating to matriculation requirements. (pp. 87-88)
  - Recommendation 84: That the term 'matriculation' be discontinued. (p. 88)
  - Recommendations 85-90 regarding higher education entry criteria. (pp. 92-95)

### **CHAPTER 7: ORGANISATION AND DELIVERY**

- Discusses concerns relating to organisation and delivery, and makes Recommendations 94-99 in this regard.

### **CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION**

- Makes Recommendations 100-104 with regard to implementation.