

**Latest CEET papers**

This issue provides some key points from two CEET papers involving international comparisons of VET policies, a study of regional change and VET, a paper on price changes and a major report on the funding of students with disabilities.

Other CEET activities are listed on the website

The CEET conference will be held on 29 October in Ascot Vale and details will be provided shortly.

Gerald Burke  
Executive Director

**VET policy trends: the international context**

The main trends in Australia's policies for vocational education and training are consistent with those in key developed nations. This is one of the conclusions of a CEET study led by Peter Noonan, prepared for ANTA.

The paper considers policies relating to adult training and retraining, equity issues, issues of demand and funding, qualification structures, provider capacity, and regional and community capacity building. The issues were selected because of their prominence in the National Strategy for Vocational Education for 2004-2010. The goal was to compare the Australian approach to these issues with the direction taken in government endorsed strategies in Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Ageing, static or declining labour market participation rates and emerging skills shortages all proved to be major policy concerns. The strategies include measures to increase interest and demand from those with low levels of skills and knowledge, rather than just responding to demand as it emerges.

In the UK free vocational education and training is provided for disadvantaged people, 14 - 19 year olds and adults without basic skills.

A key finding was the priority placed on labour market intelligence. Bodies similar to Australia's new industry skills councils are being established in the countries considered, and one of their major roles is to obtain better information and understanding of the working of the labour market and skill needs.

CEET Working Paper 54, *Policy developments in VET: analysis for selected countries*, by Peter Noonan, Gerald Burke, and Paul White.

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**Building VET capability in Australia and the UK**

Australian and UK governments are promoting innovation as essential to economic success in a competitive global market. They are also instituting initiatives to build capability in VET systems to meet new skill needs. Fran Ferrier has reviewed the developments in a project for ANTA.

**Australia**

In Australia, four states have adopted a 'whole-of-government' approach to innovation with co-ordinated policies and activities in government departments and agencies. In other states and territories a more de-centralised approach is apparent.

Most governments have established centres, networks and on-line resources to assist individuals and businesses to commercialise new products. Many have set up bodies of experts to give advice on innovation. Several have made grants to VET to assist the development of new resources and programs. Initiatives include an innovation fund in Western Australia for VET providers to engage in collaborative research. In Victoria, seed funding has been provided for the development of 'specialist centres', for selected VET providers.

The strengths of the initiative revealed to date include the attention that being given to the issues and the framing of initiatives to reflect the needs of regions. Weaknesses include the lack of representation of VET interests on innovation advisory bodies and the absence of collaborative activities across state boundaries.

**UK**

In the UK the development of 'Centres of Vocational Excellence' (CoVEs) is one of a number of initiatives to re-invigorate the VET system following an extensive national skills inquiry. The CoVE program has been successful in building the status of vocational education, in improving specialist facilities and in promoting links between VET providers, industries, enterprises and communities.

*Building capability to meet new skill needs, An examination of initiatives by Australia's States and Territories and England's Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) Program*, Fran Ferrier, to be available soon at

[www.education.monash.edu.au/centres/ceet](http://www.education.monash.edu.au/centres/ceet)  
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## Funding VET for students with disabilities

Resources are limited so it is important to ensure that funds for students with disabilities are spent efficiently in order to encourage more people with a disability to participate in education and training and to ensure that they achieve what they want out of the training. Chris Selby Smith and Fran Ferrier consider these issues in a report for NCVET.

The report notes that factors such as the type, level and location of the course, the type and severity of the disability, the needs of people with disabilities who have not yet entered VET and the interaction between VET study and other aspects of the lives of these students all need to be considered when selecting a preferred model for funding. The transitions, for example, from school to VET or from VET to employment, can cause particular difficulties for students with a disability.

This report provides important information for those who manage training institutions and are committed to making the learning environment more supportive for people with a disability.

*The funding of vocational education and training for students with disabilities*, Vols 1 and 2, 2004, Chris Selby Smith and Fran Ferrier  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1382.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1382.html)  
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## Regional development and training

This project, conducted by CEET during 2003 in Gannawarra, was a pilot investigation of the relationship between innovation and the provision of education and training in regional Australia.

Considerable innovation is occurring in the industries and enterprises of Gannawarra. This is leading to changes in the types of training being sought. The study found that education and training providers might engage more closely with enterprises to negotiate ways of meeting their particular needs. Issues arising included the extent to which training providers could provide greater assistance to enterprises. Could training providers have more access to the specialised and contemporary knowledge of professional or industry associations, or of equipment manufacturers and suppliers?

The establishment of Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) by the Victorian Government has been successful in strengthening relationships between educational providers, communities and industry.

Though the LLENs are still in their infancy, they are already playing a significant role in ensuring attention to learning, skills and training needs. They are contributing to the establishment of cooperative approaches at the local level in Gannawarra. This suggests that, if adapted to suit local conditions, similar networks might also be successful in other parts of Australia in helping education and training adapt to meet local needs.

CEET Working Paper No. 55. May 2004 *Regional development, innovation, skill needs and training: A pilot study in the Shire of Gannawarra, Victoria*. Chris Selby Smith and Fran Ferrier.  
Contact [chris.selbysmith@buseco.monash.edu.au](mailto:chris.selbysmith@buseco.monash.edu.au)

## Price changes

The application of price indexes to vocational education and training is examined in a paper by Gerald Burke and Paul White prepared for ANTA. Price indexes are measures of the average change in price of a 'basket' of goods and services.

Selecting the appropriate index to use for vocational education and training depends on the purpose. For example, if we wish to measure the living costs of VET students then the CPI (or sections of it) may be appropriate.

But if we wish to measure the change in the quantity of resources—both human and non-human—that go into education and training, then we need a price index that measures the costs of those resources.

If governments wish to adjust funding so that resource levels per hour of training are preserved, they could use an index of the costs of human and non-human resources in the VET sector.

There are considerable differences in the size of the annual increases in different price indexes and it is important that more attention be given to an issue which has consequences for the level of resources and the analysis of efficiency.

CEET Working Paper No. 53, *Price measures in education and training*, by Gerald Burke and Paul White. [gerald.burke@education.monash.edu.au](mailto:gerald.burke@education.monash.edu.au)

## Catholic schooling

CEET has recently been engaged by the Catholic Education Commission to examine the changes in access occurring in Catholic schools in Victoria. Michael Long was the principal author of the report *The Affordability of Catholic Schools in Victoria: Access to Catholic schools by students from Catholic families*, 2004 [www.cecv.melb.catholic.edu.au/](http://www.cecv.melb.catholic.edu.au/)