

Australian Teacher Education Association
Annual Conference Proceedings Archive



Please cite this paper as:

Singh, M., Li, B., & Harreveld, B. (2009). *Sen's capability approach and Year 12 completers' post-school destinations: Implications for teacher education*. Paper presented at 'Teacher education crossing borders: Cultures, contexts, communities and curriculum' the annual conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA), Albury, 28 June – 1 July.

Published by: Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA)

Stable URL: <http://atea.edu.au/ConfPapers/2009/Non-Refereed/Singh2.pdf>

Review Status: Refereed – *Abstract and Full Paper blind peer reviewed.*
 Non-Refereed – *Abstract Only reviewed.*

Peer Review Refereeing Process:

The conference committee for the annual conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA) facilitates the review of all papers for admission to the conference. Abstracts for all papers presented are reviewed by the organising committee as to suitability for presentation as research at the annual conference, but full paper refereeing is optional. Only papers actually presented at the conference are published on the ATEA website.

Refereed papers were subject to a thorough and anonymous peer review process that involved a blind review of the research publication in its entirety by independent qualified experts from the field of teacher education. Provisionally accepted papers were returned to the author/s for revision before inclusion in the conference proceedings. The refereeing system was administered by the ATEA Conference Convenor and committee, and conducted independent of the ATEA Executive Committee, which does not influence the selection of peers. The results of the peer review process are reported directly to the authors and recorded by the Conference Convenor.

Papers are identified as referred or non-refereed by an against the relevant category under "Review Status" above.

The ATEA Conference Proceedings Archive listing on our website is the ultimate authority on which papers were refereed. All refereed and non-refereed papers presented at the annual conference are published in full in the appropriate category on the ATEA website:
<http://www.attea.edu.au>.

Sen's capability approach and Year 12 completers' post-school destinations: Implications for teacher education

Michael Singh¹, Bingyi Li¹ and Bobby Harreveld²

Email: m.j.singh@uws.edu.au

A paper presented at the Conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association
Teacher education crossing borders: Cultures, contexts, communities and curriculum
Albury Entertainment Centre, Albury Wodonga, New South Wales
28 June – 1 July 2009

Abstract

This paper situates school-to-work transitional purpose of VETiS in Queensland by comparison of young adults who complete Year 12 for their different groups such as gender, geographic location, indigenous and socio-economic status. The literature indicates that students' educational outcomes are related to their social environment and culture, an issue need to be paid attention by the teachers engaging in senior education. Methodologically, this study is situated in relation to the Australian Governments' *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) and the fourth edition of the AQF (Australian Qualification Framework) Implementation Handbook (2007) on Guidelines for Certificates I – IV. Our data analysis based on Queensland *Next Step* surveys (2005-2008) represents an attempt of Sen's (1992, 1999) conceptualisation of individual capability and achievement, freedom to choice as well as their interrelationship to their social groupings. The paper explores how the teacher educators as well student-teachers position themselves based on Senior Learning innovation, how to balance tensions between the reality of a working market model and teaching young adults in VETiS. Finally, some recommendations are proposed on how to cultivate multi-functional student-teachers for enhancing Senior Learning education and empower them to contribute to effective and efficient teaching in senior level education.

1. Introduction

Education and training are important drivers of economic and social success for individuals, employers and nations. Vocational education and training in schools (VETiS) *may* offer a route whereby young adults might escape from their disadvantaged backgrounds and climb the socio-economic ladder. This paper adds to the conceptual exploration of inequality and achievement through an examination of data regarding the post-school destinations of Year 12 completers. Focusing on gender, geographic location, Indigenous identity and socio-economic status, it seeks to extend current policy considerations in terms of the freedom Year 12 completers have to achieve valued goals, including the place of Vocational Education and Training in their work/life trajectory. Specifically, this paper uses Amartya Sen's

¹ University of Western Sydney

² Central Queensland University

(1992; 1999) capability approach to explore what Year 12 completers' post-school destinations might mean for teacher education.

This paper represents but an initial attempt at ascertain the potential of Sen's (1992; 1999) conceptualisation of capability approach in studying the post-school destinations of young adults according, having due regard for their heterogeneity, for insights into future directions for teacher education. This paper provides an analysis of Queensland Government's (2005; 2006; 2007; 2008) *Next Step* reports which present the results of annual State-wide surveys of the destinations of students who completed Year 12 at the end of previous year. In doing so, this paper contributes three important features that are not currently available in the research literature on the outcomes of Vocational Education and Training in (Queensland) Schools (VETiS). First, while the Queensland *Next Step* survey concentrates on a year by year analysis, this paper gives a picture of the post-school destinations of Year 12 across four years. Second, the study reported contributes to a longitudinal analysis of the Queensland Government's *Next Step* surveys. Third, it enables comparisons to be made of Year 12 completers' destination and VET, higher education, work or other activities.

The Queensland Government's *Next Step* (2005; 2006; 2007; 2008) surveys report the results of annual State-wide analysis of the destinations of students who completed Year 12 at the end of previous year. These reports provide the information about the initial study and/or work destinations of young adults after completing Senior Learning. Our analysis identifies four main destinations for different groups of Year 12 completers, namely, further study at university; further study in VET including apprenticeships or traineeships; full-time work, and other activities including part-time work, unemployment or not in the labour force. The implications for teacher education relate to the diversity among Year 12 completers; improving access to university; preparing teachers of students pursuing other productive post-school destinations, and addressing the needs of students for whom Senior Learning is failing. The paper provides insights into the educational research in this field and offers a preliminary attempt at ascertain the relevance of Sen's (1992, 1999) capability approach to the outcomes young adults gain from Queensland's reforms to Senior Learning.

2. Sen's Capability Approach

It is often argued that education will help the young adults gain a good job and a better future. However, it should be noted that their choices are influenced not only by their own decision but also by factors such as the economy, public policies and other environmental influences.

Amartya Sen (1992) has conceptualised the capability approach as a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and their social arrangements. It provides the theoretical foundations for his human development model, which stands in opposition to the human capital mould. The core characteristic of the capability approach is its focus on *what people are effectively able to do and to be*, that is, their capability. Sen (1992:5) defines "capability" in the following terms:

"A person's capability to achieve functionings (doing or being) that he or she has reason to value provides a general approach to the evaluation of social arrangements, and this yields a particular way of viewing the assessment of equality and inequality".

The capability approach is based on the notion that life is composed of various doings and beings, the quality of a life is assessed in terms of the person's freedom to choose from possible ways of living to achieve valuable functionings (Sen, 1992: 40). With the capability approach, he offers a highly productive alternative informational basis for social evolution to that of the human capital model. It does so, first by the identification of valuable functionings and second, by asking which functionings a person is able to achieve if s/he wants to do so.

The notion of agency is central to the capability approach. The core of functionings and capabilities is the matter of choice, where a person exercises her or his agency to make choices from a range of alternatives:

“A person can—and typically does—also have goals and values other than the pursuit of one's own well-being... A person's agency achievement refers to the realization of goals and values she has reasons to pursue, whether or not they are connected with her own well-being...It refers to the person's success in the pursuit of the totality of her considered goals and objectives” (Sen, 1992: 56).

For Sen (1992) agency and well-being are connected to mean one's ability to pursue goals that one values and has reason to value. The concept of agency advanced by Sen (1992: 58) relates to a person's capability to act and bring about change, the achievement of which can be judged in terms of her/his own values and objectives. However, he points out a person's achievements are not caused solely by her/his own activities. Circumstances beyond his/her own control also aid – or hinder – his/her functionings directed at achieving well-being.

Measuring well-being freedom, or well-being achievements, does not coincide with an assessment of human agency, or agency achievements. Agency is linked to the capability someone has to act, and through her/his action to induce changes s/he values and seeks. This is one of Sen's (1992) key concepts in discussing the individual freedom for development.

However, how can we choose or identify the valuable capability and functionings among the range of possible relevant functionings and capabilities necessary for well-being? Sen (1992: x) considers the question of “freedom” and asks “equality of what” for “the actual diversity of human beings”. He says:

“We are deeply diverse in our internal characteristics (such as age, gender, general abilities, particular talents, proneness to illnesses, and so on) as well as in external circumstances (such as ownership of assets, social background, environmental predicaments, and so on)” (Sen, 1992: xi).

Sen (1992: 43) suggests selecting a class of functionings in the corresponding description of capabilities under evaluative spaces. The focus is on “the underlying concerns and values, in terms of which some definable functionings may be important and others quite trivial and negligible.” (Sen, 1992: 44)

However, we should note that there are many factors influencing the means and extent of freedom. Sen (1992: 36) indicates that “resources tell us about the set of commodity bundles from which we can choose”. A young adult's advantage may be judged by a command over resources in his/her social environment. This is an important indicator to use when comparing individual advantage concerning the issue

of freedom. Differences in social and economic characteristics can make the conversion of resources or primary goods into the freedom to achieve variable.

The capability approach in education

Sen's (1992) capability approach characterises individual well-being in terms of what a person is actually able to do or to be. Therefore, education is important in the capability approach for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons. Being knowledgeable and having access to an education that allows a person to flourish is argued to be a valuable capability. How have others gone about researching capabilities in education?

There is an increased exploration of the capability approach from an educational point of view because "education and literacy might actually be considered as key factors in the capability approach" (Otto & Ziegler, 2006: 269). Both education and literacy are "regarded as fundamental resources enabling people and structuring the effective opportunities of people to live a life they have reason to choose and value" (Otto & Ziegler, 2006: 269).

Robeyns (2006) examined the intrinsic value of literacy and its instrumental role in enhancing wider capabilities. Robeyns (2006: 69) conducted research with attention to gender issues by comparing three models of education, namely the human capital supposition, rights discourse and the capability approach. For Robeyns (2006: 70) the implications for educational policies means "dealing with rights discourses strategically, using them where they are likely to contribute to expanding people's educational capabilities, and supplementing them with other instruments if needed". Lanzi (2007: 426) investigated a conceptual framework in which educational policies can be analysed and designed with a capability approach. Without capability, that is a person's abilities, skills and knowledge, the individual facing shortfalls in "opportunities for functioning" needed to exercise legal rights, engage public policies or external social conditions to achieve what they desire and value (Lanzi, 2007: 426). Thus, capabilities are positively or negatively affected by achieved functionings. Lanzi (2007: 427) points out that "there are no clear boundaries between different sorts of capabilities. All of them interact with each other and with respect to the achieved functionings". Some capabilities can, and need to be fostered by educational involvement for living in the information age (Lanzi, 2007: 426).

In the terminology of the capability approach, Robeyns (2005: 99) points out three groups of *conversion factors* influence how well a person can convert capability inputs into functionings achievements. These conversion factors are:

1. Personal conversion factors such as physical condition, sex, literacy, intelligence which influence how a person can convert the characteristics, commodities, infrastructures into a functioning.
2. Social conversion factors such as public policy, social norms, gender roles, societal hierarchies, discriminating practises and
3. Environmental conversion factors such as climate, geographical location, education distribution play a role in the conversion from characteristics of the good to the individual functioning.

All of these factors influence whether, how and to which degree young adults can use their capabilities to convert the characteristics of external and internal economic, social and cultural assets into particular personal functionings. This suggests four contributory questions for which Sen's (1992; 1999) capability approach to analysing evidence of Year 12 completers' post-school destinations can be discussed in terms of implications for teacher education:

Presented at ATEA 2009 Annual Conference
as Non-Refereed Paper

1. How might teacher education respond to the different kinds of diversity constructed the *Next Steps* reports?
2. What is teacher education to do to improve opportunities for access to teacher education for those groupings of students not accessing university?
3. What is teacher education to do for those teachers who teach students who are pursuing a range of productive post-school destinations?
4. What is teacher education to do those students for whom innovation in seniors secondary schooling through VETiS are still failing?

The next section provides an overview of research strategy used in this study. It involves an investigation of the statistical representation of the post-school destinations for Year 12 completers in order to explore the place of VETiS in the lives of those of Indigenous identity and differing socio-economic status and/or geographic locations.

3. Research Method

This study is working towards elucidating keys features of the relations between inequality, achievement and the freedom to achieve (Sen, 1992) by developing theoretically informed and empirically grounded explanations. Three points relating to this study are highlighted here, namely the delimitations of the case, its policy context, and the data set that has been analysed.

The case of “post-school destinations for Year 12 completers”

The focus of this study is on the “post-school destinations for Year 12 completers”, a focus both directs the collection of the research evidence and which, in turn is refined in the light of a theoretically informed analysis of the data. An initial conceptualisation of “post-school destinations for Year 12 completers” arose from Singh and Sawyer’s (2008) report that in 2000, of the 58,100 school leavers in Queensland, 28 per cent (16,400) were “early school leavers,” of whom 76 per cent were not in education or training, and 29 per cent were unemployed. Earlier, Gardner (2002: 12–14) recommended that the 5000 (11.5 %) of Queensland students who left school before Year 11 be targeted by policy-makers for new initiatives in education, training and work.

Delimited in this way, “post-school destinations for Year 12 completers” names the young adults who might be assumed to be the beneficiaries of the Queensland Government’s education and training reforms. These reforms have encouraged schools to improve the employability of all young adults and to engage more actively those disengaging from education and training.

The policy situatedness of this study

That education is an important driver of economic and social success for individuals, employers and nations have been identified as a driver of Government policy, at the State, Commonwealth and National levels no matter which aspect of education different polices address (see Table 1). All the recent policies focus on government commitment to offer equal educational opportunity for young adults, and to ensure that having the knowledge, understanding, skills and values predicted to being necessary a productive and rewarding life in society. All these particular

educational policies aim to provide various responsive and flexible pathways to ensure the successful transition of young adults from school to the job market by integrating curriculum and pedagogy with the projected demands of higher education and the labour market.

The Australian Governments' *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008), builds on the previous the goals for schooling made in Adelaide in 1999. *The Adelaide Declaration* (DEST, 1999) aimed to ensure that each citizen has "the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society". It emphasised the capacity of all young people to learn, and the role of schooling in developing that capacity. The intention is to ensure that when students leave school they have employment-related skills, an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways to vocational education and training (VET), further education, employment and lifelong learning.

Stepping Forward—Improving Pathways for all Young People—A Joint Declaration by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for Education, Training, Employment, Youth and Community Services (MCEETYA, 2002) proposed strategies to support young adults moving successfully through the different stages of their lives and responding to the challenges of the future. In particular *Stepping Forward* proposed practical options for strengthening transition pathways for young adults who are disconnected or at risk of becoming disconnected (MCEETYA, 2002: 1).

The *Joint Ministerial Statement: Future Directions for Vocational Education and Training in Queensland Schools* (Queensland Government, 2004) made a commitment to develop clear pathways to tertiary study, including recognition of VETiS undertaken at or through school. *Queensland's proposed responses to the challenges of skills for jobs and growth (Green Paper)* (Queensland Government, 2005) supported the Queensland Government's focused on improving VET services across both the public and private training sectors so as to be more responsive to industry needs. It proposed modernising the roles of and relationships between universities, industry groups, businesses, employers and public and private training providers.

The Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Queensland Government, 2006) is a milestone in innovation in Queensland Senior Learning being "the primary legislative instrument for education in Queensland". Young adults in Queensland are now required to stay at school to participate in education or training for a further two years (Years 11 and 12), or until they have gained the new Queensland Certificate of Education or Certificate III/IV vocational qualification, or until they turn 17 (Queensland Government, 2005: 19). The *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (Queensland Government, 2006) provided "the first major shift in the delivery of education in Queensland in more than 40 years [and supplied] a legislative framework for the Senior Phase of Learning to ensure that Queensland's young people are either 'learning or earning'" (Harreveld & Singh, 2006: 28).

Towards Q2 (Queensland Government, 2008) considers the benefits of, and connections between education and the economy as well as the environment, health, crime and community engagement. This policy claims "Queenslanders are better educated and more skilled than they've ever been" (Queensland Government, 2008: 26) since Queensland Government endorsed *Queensland State Education 2010* (Queensland Government, 2000). *Towards Q2* (Queensland Government, 2008: 7) identifies entrenched disadvantage as necessitating empowering of disadvantaged people with purpose and knowledge to make changes that create a better and brighter

future. It speaks to the inequality of education from the root and commits the Queensland Government to ensuring that disadvantaged groups will not be left behind. The Queensland Government promises that “more young Queenslanders [will] complete Year 12 or equivalent level of achievement as an essential building block for post-school qualifications” (Queensland Government, 2008: 31).

Ten years after the issue of the Adelaide Declaration, the Australian Education Ministers issued the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) expressing their aspirations for young Australians for the next decade and beyond. Besides setting “equity and excellence” in school education as the number one national goal, the second goal of the *Melbourne Declaration* is that “all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens” (MCEETYA, 2008: 3). In addition to further developing the knowledge and academic skills of all young Australians, the *Melbourne Declaration* emphasises the promotion of personalised learning to fulfil students’ diverse capabilities, providing equal access to high-quality schooling free from discrimination based on gender, socioeconomic background or geographic location (MCEETYA, 2008: 7).

All of these policies generated over the past decade support successful pathways for young adults, regardless of gender, Indigenous identity, location, or socioeconomic status. These policies on education, training and employment now influence, but do not decisively determine student’s destination after completing Year 12.

Table 1: Policy context related to the *Next Step 2005-2008*

Year/ event/ publication	Significance and influence on education and training
The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21 st Century (DEST, 1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides broad directions to guide schools and education authorities in securing these outcomes for students • develop fully the talents and capacities of all students • foster clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education
Footprints to the future: report from the Prime Minister’s Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (The former Howard Government’s Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address to strengthen pathways for young people from school to work, further education and active citizenship • address education and training as the foundation for effective transitions • provide support and strategies for those young people who may experience some difficulties in their transitions • focus on young adults diversity
Stepping Forward: Improving Pathways for all Young People (MCEETYA, 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on developing practical options to strengthen transition pathways for young people who are disconnected or at risk of becoming disconnected from society • establish a common direction in developing transition opportunities for young people, particularly those most at risk
Stepping Forward Action Plan ((MCEETYA, 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote a holistic approach to the range of options that young people face as they move towards independence • identify initiatives that address the needs of vulnerable young people
Joint Ministerial Statement: Future Directions for Vocational Education and Training in Queensland Schools (Queensland Government, 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more students exit with recognised VET qualifications, and with qualifications at Certificate III level if possible • qualifications obtained through VET in Schools programs will receive better recognition from industry • QSA will have sustainable processes in syllabus development, support and advice to schools to ensure qualifications are current • pathways through VET to further education and employment will be stronger than at present, and • more VET study options will be available to students, including the option for school students to enrol in a Certificate III level qualification that can be completed post-school at a registered training organisation.
Queensland’s proposed responses to the challenges of skills for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a more responsive and flexible vocational education and training system

jobs and growth (Green Paper) (Queensland Government, 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a workforce and skills response to the ageing population • increase labour force participation through new skilling strategies for the under-skilled
Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Queensland Government, 2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support young people remaining in education or training until the age of 17 • make available to each Queensland child or young person a high-quality education • ensure education programs are responsive to the individual needs of children and young people
Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sets two educational goals for the next 10 years <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence. 2. All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, active and informed citizens.
Towards Q2 (Queensland Government, 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stress on technological advancements and increase global competition for new knowledge • place a higher premium on skilled workers into the future

The data set

Harreveld and Singh (2008) found that, until recently specific outcomes from Queensland’s reforms to Senior Learning (Year 10, 11 and 12) were difficult to capture and verify from official evaluations. With the statistical data now available from the *Next Step* surveys (Queensland Government, 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008) this study contributes to efforts to redress this concern. The *Next Step* surveys are conducted by (what is now) the Queensland Department of Education, and Training through the Office of the Government Statistician. The surveys to-date have targeted all students from Government schools, non-Government schools and TAFE secondary colleges who completed Year 12 in Queensland in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. The response rates for the surveys has increased over time, rising from 59.9% in 2005 to 77.5% in 2007, and stabilising thereafter with 81.2% in 2007 and 80.1% in 2008.

4. Destinations of Queensland’s Year 12 completers in Queensland (2005-08)

This section begins by providing a profile of main destination of Year 12 completers in Queensland for the time-span 2005-2008. It then indicates the main destination of Year 12 completers by gender, socio-economic status, metropolitan/non-metropolitan location and Indigenous identity for the same period.

Main destination of Queensland’s Year 12 completers

With respect to the post-school destinations for Year 12 completers, Table 2 shows that university is still the most likely choice for young adults, even with the small decline rate by 2.2 % from 2005 to 2008. The choice of VET for young adults after Year 12 accounts for more than one quarter of the total number of students. However, the VET destination rate dropped by 4.6% from 2005 to 2008. The decline in VET destinations reflects mixed results for different groupings of students. There were those Year 12 completers who entered full work at an increasing rate of 2.5% over the four years. It may be presumed that the increasing employment rate was positively related to the global economic boom during the past four years. However, with the economic crisis beginning in 2008, it is expected that the employment rate of young adults is likely to decline. This will pose new question for Governments, policy-makers, educators, employment brokers and young adults themselves. The destination for those designated as “other” increased from 17.6% in 2005 to 22% in 2008. The “other” destinations include working part-time, seeking work or not studying/not in labour force. Apparently, despite the Queensland’s reformist

aspirations this suggests that there are still significant numbers of young adults are not successful in making the transition from learning to earning after leaving school.

Table 2: Main destinations of Year 12 completers by gender, by Metro/Non-metro, by Indigenous status, Queensland (2005-2008)

		2005	2006	2007	2008
University	Male %	31.8	31.9	32	30.8
	Female %	40.6	41.1	40.5	37.7
	Metropolitan %	39.2	40.4	41.2	38.7
	Non-metro %	31	29	26.3	24.9
	Indigenous %	15	15.3	12.6	14
	Non-Indige %	37.1	37.1	37.1	34.9
	Total No. / %	8648 / 36.6	11378 / 36.7	12022 / 36.6	11546 / 34.4
VET	Male %	35.2	33.2	32.3	31.4
	Female %	27.2	24.3	22.4	21.4
	Metropolitan %	29.7	26.9	25.6	24.8
	Non-metro %	33.2	32.4	32.6	29.4
	Indigenous %	39.1	36.1	33.2	31.9
	Non-Indige %	30.7	28.4	27	26
	Total No. / %	7293 / 30.8	8848 / 28.6	8939 / 27.1	8788 / 26.2
Full-time	Male %	15.5	14.4	15.3	17.1
	Female %	14.5	12.7	15.3	17.7
	Metropolitan %	13.6	12	12.8	15.4
	Non-metro %	17.8	16.7	20.6	21.8
	Indigenous %	16.4	13.6	14.4	16.5
	Non-Indige %	14.9	13.5	15.3	17.4
	Total No. / %	3532 / 14.9	4188 / 13.5	5028 / 15.3	5838 / 17.4
Other	Male %	17.5	20.6	20.4	20.7
	Female %	17.8	21.9	21.8	23.2
	Metropolitan %	17.4	20.9	20.5	21.2
	Non-metro %	18	21.9	22.5	22.7
	Indigenous %	29.4	34.9	39.7	37.5
	Non-Indige %	17.3	21	20.7	21.7
	Total No. / %	4175 / 17.6	6575 / 21.2	6959 / 21.2	7396 / 22

Main destination of Year 12 completers by gender

According to Table 2, there are gender differences evident in the post-school destination of Queensland's young adults. It shows that females are more likely to enter university at a rate 10% higher compared than their male peers. The same tendency appears in some of the higher level VET programs such as Certificates III

and IV, and the traineeships (see Table 5). However, approximately 10% more males than females are more likely to enrol in VET courses. With respect to non-learning destinations, a similar proportion of males and females enter full-time work or other activities. Another point worth noting is that the destination of females with respect to “other” activities dropped by 2.5% in 2008 compared to the previous three years (see Table 2). The gap for “other” activities between males and females is more salient among the Indigenous group (see Table 4).

Main destination of Year 12 completers by socio-economic status

Transition to post-school education and training appears to be strongly associated with socioeconomic status (see Table 3). The percentage of Year 12 completers destination to university from the lowest SES grouping dropped by 6.7% from 2005 to 2008. During this period Year 12 completers from the highest SES grouping were twice as likely to enter university as those from the lowest SES grouping. For all SES groupings VET as a post-Year 12 destination dropped approximately 4% from 2005 to 2008. However, 6% fewer of those in the highest SES quartile undertook VET courses following Year 12 relative to those in the lowest SES quartile. Those Year 12 completers in the lowest SES grouping entered full work at an increasing rate over the four years, rising by 4%; it went up by 3% for those grouped in the highest SES quartile. In terms of “other” destinations those grouped in the lowest SES quartile increased by 6.5% across year 2005 to 2008. While those grouped in the highest SES Year 12 completers also followed this trend, with the percentage rising among those “working full time” and “other” destinations, there was only a moderate increase (1.7%) among those in “other destinations.”

Table 3: Main destination of Year 12 completers, by socio-economic status, Queensland (2005-2008)

		2005	2006	2007	2008
University	Lowest SES %	30	25.6	25.6	23.3
	2 nd lowest SES %	32.7	31.6%	31.4	29.2
	2 nd highest SES%	38.5	38.2%	37	36.7
	Highest SES %	49	51.3%	51.8	48.3
VET	Lowest SES %	32.3	32.3	30.4	28.6
	2 nd lowest SES %	32.1	30.5	29.7	27.4
	2 nd highest SES%	29.7	28.3	27.2	26.3
	Highest SES %	26.6	23.2	21.6	22.4
Full-time	Lowest SES %	15.7	15.9	17.5	19.7
	2 nd lowest SES %	16.0	15.2	16.9	19.3
	2 nd highest SES%	15.3	12.5	15.4	17.0
	Highest SES %	10.5	10.3	11.2	13.5

Other	Lowest SES %	22	26.2	26.5	28.5
	2 nd lowest SES %	19	22.7	22	24
	2 nd highest SES%	16.3	21	20.4	20.1
	Highest SES %	14	15.2	15.4	15.7

Main destination of Year 12 completers by metropolitan/non-metropolitan location

According to the *Next Step* (2006, 36), the metropolitan area is defined as “schools in the Statistical Divisions of Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and West Moreton, while non-metropolitan encompass the remainder of Queensland”. Table 2 outlines the regional differences in the main destinations of Year 12 graduates combined with other factors such as gender, Indigenous identity. It shows the key results in this regard. First, the university destination rate in metropolitan regions is much higher than that in non-metropolitan regions, being 8.2%, 11.4%, 15.9%, 13.8% respectively higher across the years 2005 to 2008. Second, the VET destination rate in non-metropolitan regions is much higher than that in metropolitan regions, being 6.5%, 5.5%, 7% and 4.6% higher across the years 2005 to 2008. Third, the full-time work destination rate in non-metropolitan regions is also higher than that in metropolitan regions, being 4.2%, 4.7%, 7.8% and 6.4% higher across the years 2005 to 2008.

Main destination of Year 12 completers by Indigenous identity

According to the *Next Step*'s data (Queensland Government, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) Indigenous Year 12 completers make up 2.1%, 1.9%, 2.3% and 2.4% respectively of the total cohort. Table 2 shows that Indigenous Year 12 completers were as less than 50% likely enter university when compared with their non-Indigenous peers. However, more Indigenous choose to VET destinations by 5-8% higher than Non-indigenous peers during 2005 to 2008. Another gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Year 12 completers is that approximately 16% more Indigenous Year 12 graduates are in “other” category. Table 4 shows the large variation in destinations among Indigenous Year 12 graduates by gender and regions. More female Indigenous graduates choose to enter university compared to their male Indigenous peers, but the choices they made with respect to VET is the opposite; more Indigenous males than females choose to take VET programs. Further, there are substantial regional differences between the Indigenous Year 12 completers in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. The Indigenous Year 12 graduates in the metropolitan area are more than twice as likely as those in non-metropolitan area to enter university. However, the “other” destination is approximately 10% higher for Indigenous Year 12 graduates from non-metropolitan area than those from metropolitan area.

Table 4: Main destination of Indigenous Year 12 completers, by gender and Metro/Non-metro status, Queensland (2005-2008)

		2005	2006	2007	2008
		%	%	%	%
University	Male %	12.4	8.5	8.6	10.5
	Female %	17	20.4	16.4	17.3

	Metro %		20.5	22.4	21.8
	Non-metro %		12.6	8	8.1
VET	Male %	44	44.2	37.5	36.5
	Female %	35.1	30	29.4	27.8
	Metro %		37.5	33	29.6
	Non-metro %		35.3	33.3	33.7
Full-time	Male %	17.8	15.9	16.1	17.7
	Female %	15.2	12	12.8	15.4
	Metro %		12.7	14.3	16.3
	Non-metro %		14.1	14.5	16.7
Other	Male %	25.8	31.4	37.8	35.4
	Female %	32.6	37.6	41.6	39.5
	Metro %		29.3	30.2	32.4
	Non-metro %		37.9	43.2	41.4

Main destination of Year 12 completers for VET by gender, metropolitan/non-metropolitan, by Indigenous status, by SES

Vocational education and training pathways influence young adults' choice of destinations. Table 5 provides information about Year 12 graduates' VET destinations based on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) for recognised vocational education and training qualifications, Certificate I-IV. Approximately 0.9-3.2% more Indigenous young adults choose relatively lower level of VET Certificate I-II compared those in the non-Indigenous grouping. Likewise, young adults from the non-metropolitan region, Indigenous and lowest socioeconomic background are less likely to choose a Certificate IV destination which is a higher level qualification likely to lead to more professional work. Young adults from the metropolitan area are more than twice as likely as those from non-metropolitan area to choose a Certificate IV destination. Table 5 also shows the gender-oriented destination of Year 12 graduates. Young adult males are five times more like to choose an apprenticeship than females, and twice as likely as young adult females to choose traineeships. Interestingly, the choice of an apprenticeship or traineeship as a post-school destination is much more likely among young adults from the non-metropolitan region, Indigenous graduates or those of the lowest SES background.

Table 5: Main destination of Year 12 completers for VET, by gender, metro/non-metro, indigenous and socio-economic status, Queensland 2005-2008

		2005	2006	2007	2008
Cert I-II/ other	Male %	4.3	4.3	3.9	3.5
	Female %	3.7	3.9	3.1	3.2
	Metro %	3.7	4	3.2	3.2
	Non-metro %	4.4	4.4	4.0	3.6
	Indigenous %	7.1	5	6.6	5
	Non-Indige %	3.9	4.1	3.4	3.3
	Lowest SES %	4.5	4.8	4.4	3.9
	Highest SES %	3.5	3.5	2.9	2.8
Cert III	Male %	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.2
	Female %	2.7	3.1	2.4	2.4
	Metro %	2.0	2.1	1.7	1.6
	Non-metro %	2.4	2.7	2.2	2.2
	Indigenous %	2.6	2.8	1.8	3.9
	Non-Indige %	2.1	2.2	2.7	1.8
	Lowest SES %	2.7	3.4	2.4	2.8

	Highest SES %	1.5	1.4	1.2	1.2
Cert IV +	Male %	7.7	6.5	6.0	5.4
	Female %	9.6	7.7	7.3	6.9
	Metro %	10.9	9	8.5	7.7
	Non-metro %	4.2	3.3	2.8	2.8
	Indigenous %	6.1	4.3	3.8	4.2
	Non-Indige %	8.8	7.2	6.8	6.2
	Lowest SES %	9.2	6.2	6.4	5.3
	Highest SES %	10.2	7.9	7.1	6.5
Apprentice	Male %	17.3	16.6	17.3	17.3
	Female %	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.4
	Metro %	7.7	7.2	7.8	8.1
	Non-metro %	12	12.8	12.6	12.8
	Indigenous %	10.8	12.1	9.5	9.3
	Non-Indige %	9.1	8.9	9.3	9.5
	Lowest SES %	9.1	10.3	9.7	9.9
	Highest SES %	6.6	8.5	7.0	8.1
Trainee	Male %	4.5	4.5	4.0	4
	Female %	9.0	7.5	7.5	6.6
	Metro %	5.4	4.6	4.4	4.2
	Non-metro %	10.2	9.2	9	8
	Indigenous %	12.4	11.8	10.6	9.6
	Non-Indige %	6.8	5.9	5.7	5.3
	Lowest SES %	6.8	7.7	7.5	6.8
	Highest SES %	4.8	3.7	3.5	3.8

The VET destination distribution in Queensland shows that the big gap the post-Year 12 destination of young adults associated with regional, Indigenous and economic differences. This may suggest that the projected outcomes from Queensland's reforms, including reworking Senior Learning around VETiS is not begun to take effect in rural, remote and low SES communities.

5. Year 12 completers' destinations, capabilities and teacher education

This paper has examined the post-school destinations achievement of Queensland's Year 12 completers according to their gender, regional, racial and socio-economic status inequality. Students' post-school achievements and destination are related to diversity of their internal characteristics and external circumstances. What can be said about the well-being of Queensland's Year 12 completers and their social arrangements? To evaluate the policy arrangements made for Queensland's young adults, and to make an assessment of equality and inequality, Sen (1992) suggests ascertaining how the capabilities they have gained through the innovations in Senior Learning have enabled them to achieve functionings (ways of doing or being) that they have reason to value. In other word, in terms of the capabilities of these young adults *what are they effectively able to do and to be?*

Teacher education's response to the diversity constructed the Next Steps reports

To extend current considerations of the relations between inequality and achievement we have turned to the work of Sen. The journey for exploration of young adults development should be from a person's diversity in a social environment proposed by Sen (1999) which is the irreplaceable contribution to the conceptual content. However, there are diversities of many different kinds. It might end up in a

total mess of empirical confusion if we try to take note of all the diversities. “The demands of practice indicate discretion and suggest that we disregard some diversities while concentrating on the more important ones” (Sen, 1992: 117). The question is that what the significant diversities are taken into serious account in some certain context. Sen (1992: 117) argues that “general analyses of inequality must, in many cases, proceed in terms of groups—rather than specific individual—and would tend to confine attention to intergroup variations”. In doing group analysis, we have to pick and choose between different ways of classifying people, and the classifications themselves select particular types of diversities rather than others. In the *Next Step* surveys, the students are classified by gender, economic status, regions. Therefore, it raises the questions of how to interpret young adults’ choices and how to help them achieve *their valued* capabilities facing with teachers, education researchers and policy makers.

Improving opportunities for access to teacher education for those groupings of students not accessing university

Students’ post-school achievements and destination are related to diversity of their internal characteristics and external circumstances. The results shows that more girl students choose to go to university or higher level of VET Certificate which indicates a positive gender factor in recent education. However, it should be noted the gap of choices of the post-school destination between urban and rural students; high and low SES as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. This leads us to ask if young adults throughout Queensland are getting equal opportunities to convert their resources into capabilities or well-being?

The quality of the lives of Queensland’s Year 12 completers can be assessed in terms of these young adults’ freedom to choose from possible ways of living to achieve valuable functionings, which are the various things they want to do and be (Sen, 1992: 40). Queensland’s Year 12 completers should be able to make choices from a range of valuable alternatives such university, high-level VET or full-time work, over other destinations such as unemployment, low level VET or part-time work. However, as Sen (1992) suggests the post-school destinations for these young adults are not solely the result of their her/his own activities, otherwise why would there be a need for Government policies for reforming education and training in Senior Learning. The evidence from the *Next Steps* Queensland Government reports indicate that there are circumstances beyond the control of these young adults which aid some while hindering others in achieving their well-being. The *Next Steps* measures of the well-being or achievements of these young adults do not coincide with their agency; that is their individual capability to act and to induce changes s/he values and seeks.

Queensland’s *Next Steps* surveys provide valuable evidence for reconsidering current policies claiming to redress the relations between inequality and educational achievement. The position of Year 12 completers in their education, training, work or ‘other’ context can be judged from two different perspectives. Their actual achieved destination can be related to what the reforms in Senior Learning made it possible for these young adults to manage to accomplish relative to their desired goals. Likewise, their freedom to achieve university entrance, high-level VET or full-time work is related to the opportunities they have to fulfil what they value with respect to these options. The resources and means to achieve what they value and deem as valued is shaped by the opportunities that are open to them.

Teacher education for teachers who teach students who are pursuing a range of productive post-school destinations

There are two ways that we might evaluate the post-school destination of young adults, either by adopting a “selection view” or an “options view” (Sen, 1992: 34). The selection view is focused on the comparison of the goodness of the bundles of choices a young adult is faced with, for instance, university entrance, high-level VET, full-time work which are socially valued goods, and other alternatives which are judged to be less than good (Sen, 1992: 36). The selection view presents all young adult everywhere as being able to choose. In this way, they thought of as comparing the character of all these possible destinations as equally realisable choices.

The option view provides an interactive comparison between the “commodities” themselves, that is university entrance, high-level VET, full-time work and other alternatives, and the “revealed preference” of the young adults who choose a particular post-school destination (Sen, 1992: 34). This enables us to see the decisions young adults make as depending on the socio-economic, gendered and geographic structuring of their preferences, and the comparisons they can make about substantial life options. The weighing up the potentiality among different options, indicates the constraints on the freedom young adults have to choose.

Queensland’s *Next Steps* surveys indicate that there are many factors influencing the means and extent of the freedom young adults have in selecting post-school destinations. Available resources tell them more bundles from which they can choose. The advantage or disadvantage of young adult’s may be judged by the education, training and employment resources in their social environment. Thus, Queensland’s *Next Steps* surveys are important indicator to use when comparing individual advantage and disadvantage concerning the freedom to choose among post-graduate destinations. Differences in social and economic characteristics make their conversion of resources or primary goods into the freedom to achieve variable.

Teacher education and students for whom senior secondary schooling is failing

Student-teachers can be made aware that the trend data analysed above substantiates *Towards Q2* (Queensland Government, 2008: 7) identification of entrenched disadvantage. Likewise, they can explore what is to be done with respect to *Melbourne Declaration’s* (MCEETYA, 2008: 10) commitment to achieving educational goals for young Australians, especially in the senior years of schooling and youth transitions and in particular to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous, low socioeconomic and other disadvantaged young Australians. What might the Australian, Queensland and (presumably) other State/Territory Governments do to institutionalise reforms to mitigate the structural disadvantaged faced by these groupings of young adults? Taking the education and training, and the social and economic conditions of young adults from advantaged backgrounds as the benchmark for Government, what is required? Student-teachers could investigate the challenge for realising Government policies involved in delivering to disadvantaged young adults of low socio-economic status, Indigenous identity and non-metropolitan locations the support that make for success among other young adults.

6. Conclusion

The paper has provided insights into the relevance of Sen's (1992, 1999) capability approach to the outcomes young adults gain from Queensland's reforms to Senior Learning. Our analysis of the *Next Step* surveys may help the Indigenous, non-metropolitan and low SES parents to better understand the limits Senior Learning in having in terms of the achievements of their children. It suggests the need for schools and training providers to review their plan and services for these students. Governments now know that more real world work, rather than policy rhetoric is needed to improve the post-school destinations of Indigenous, non-metropolitan and low SES students. Teacher education needs a stronger focus on students' geographic location, Indigenous identity and socio-economic status and to how it will enhance the freedom Year 12 completers have to achieve valued work/life goals through university and Vocational Education and Training.

7. Acknowledgement

This paper is the result of a research project supported by the Australian Research Council; for related publications see authors' works listed in below.

8. References

- DEST (1999). *Adelaide Declaration*.
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/policy_initiatives_reviews/national_goals_for_schooling_in_the_twenty_first_century.htm
- DEEWR (2001). *Footprints to the future*. Report from the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce.
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/career_development/publications_resources/profiles/footprints_to_the_future.htm
- Gardner, M. (2002). *The Review of Pathways Articulation: Through the Post-compulsory Years of School to Further Education, Training and Labour Market Participation*. Brisbane: The State of Queensland, Department of Employment, and Training and Department of Education.
- Harreveld, B. & Singh, M. (2008). Amartya Sen's capability approach and the brokering of learning provision for young adults. *Vocations and Learning: Studies in Vocational and Professional Education*, 1:3, 211–226.
- Harreveld, R. & Singh, M. (accepted 17 December, 2008). Contextualising learning at the education-training-work interface, *Education + Training*.
- Harreveld, R. & Singh, M. (2007). *Queensland's Education and Training Reforms for the Future: Stories of the Senior Phase Journey So Far ...*. Brisbane: Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts.
- Lanzi, D. (2007). Capabilities, human capital and education. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*. 36 (2007) 424-435.
- MCEETYA (2008). *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. Australian Education Ministers.
http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/melbourne_declaration,25979.html
- MCEETYA (2002). *Stepping Forward Improving Pathways for all Young People*.
http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/stepping_forward,11323.html
- Queensland Government (2006). *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*. Brisbane: State of Queensland.
- Queensland Government (2005). *Queensland's proposed response to the challenges of skills for jobs and growth* (Green Paper). Brisbane: State of Queensland.
- Queensland Government (2004). *Joint Ministerial Statement: Future Directions for Vocational Education and Training in Queensland Schools*. Brisbane: State of Queensland.

- Otto, H. and Ziegler, H. (2006). Capability and education. *Social Work & Society*. Vol. 4:2, 269-287.
- Queensland Government (2002). *Queensland the Smart State: Education and Training Reforms for the Future* (Green-Paper). Brisbane: State of Queensland.
- Queensland Government, (2005), *Next Step 2005: A Report on the Destinations of Year 12 Completers from 2004 in Queensland*. Brisbane: Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Queensland.
- Queensland Government, (2006), *Next Step 2006: A Report on the Destinations of Year 12 Completers from 2005 in Queensland*. Brisbane: Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Queensland.
- Queensland Government, (2007), *Next Step 2007: A Report on the Destinations of Year 12 Completers from 2006 in Queensland*. Brisbane: Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Queensland.
- Queensland Government, (2008), *Next Step 2008: A Report on the Destinations of Year 12 Completers from 2007 in Queensland*. Brisbane: Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Queensland.
- Robeyns, I. (2005). The capability approach: a theoretical survey. *Journal of Human Development*. 6:1, 93-114.
- Robeyns, I. (2006). Three models of education Right, capabilities and human capital. *Theory and Research in Education*. 4: 1, 69-84.
- Sen, A. (1992). *Inequality Re-examined*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Singh, M. & Sawyer, W. (2008). Democracy and robust hope: Queensland's education and training reforms for the future. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*. 3:3, 223-237.
- Toward Q2*. (2008). Queensland Government. Brisbane.
http://www.towardq2.qld.gov.au/library/pdf/tomorrow/Towards_Q2_Tomorrows_Queensland.pdf
- Unterhalter, E. (2005). Global inequality, capabilities, social justice: the millennium development goal for gender equality in education. *International Journal of Education Development*. 25(2005) 111-122.