The abstract of this document discusses the relationship between education and labor market demands. The author argues that there is a mismatch between the skills taught in schools and the skills demanded by the labor market. The author suggests that there is a need for greater flexibility in the education system to better prepare students for the labor market. The abstract also mentions the importance of lifelong learning and the need for adults to continue learning throughout their lives.

The full text of this document is not available in the provided image.
Equity and the AVC Pilots in Queensland

The Commonwealth education system is now attempting to implement some of the recommendations of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, which form part of a larger project involving 24 countries. This paper examines the equity implications of the Commonwealth’s policies for the AVC (Accreditation) pilots in Queensland.

The AVC pilots are designed to enable institutions to offer additional courses and degree levels, and to provide a more flexible approach to learning. These pilots are intended to increase access to higher education for disadvantaged groups, such as rural and remote communities, and to provide greater flexibility for students who may not be able to meet the traditional entry requirements for university study.

The Commonwealth government has been cautious about the equity implications of the AVC pilots, and there has been some concern that they may disproportionately benefit certain groups, such as wealthy and well-connected students. However, the pilots have been designed to ensure that they are accessible to all students, regardless of their background.

The AVC pilots are expected to have a significant impact on higher education in Queensland. They are likely to increase access to higher education for disadvantaged groups, and to provide greater flexibility for students who may not be able to meet the traditional entry requirements for university study.

Policy implications for higher education

The new policy agenda for Queensland education is likely to have a significant impact on policy makers, educators, and students. It is important that the new policy agenda is carefully considered, and that policy makers are mindful of the potential equity implications of their decisions.

One of the key policy implications is the need to ensure that the new policy agenda is accessible to all students, regardless of their background. This will require a focus on increasing access to higher education for disadvantaged groups, and on providing greater flexibility for students who may not be able to meet the traditional entry requirements for university study.

Equity and the new policy agenda

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Equity, pathways and implications for higher education

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absence of a clearly articulated policy framework, two things appear to be occurring: a filling of the vacuum by private providers (indeed explicitly encouraged as part of the government’s “competition-led” policy to comply with all the fragilising pressures accompanying the process); and a tendency to simply tinker with existing arrangements. We will elaborate in light of our Queensland-based research, noting that there may be significant differences here and that these, in turn, suggest a need for different policy responses.

As noted earlier, initiatives in developing links between schools, TAFE and workplaces were already quite well established in Queensland, though perhaps earlier “vocation education” approaches of the mid 1970s, with others reflecting more recent developments in senior schooling. Many of these initiatives, while clearly serving to enter for a more diverse student population, have been criticised for reinforcing schooling’s academic/vocational divide, while failing to do much more than provide “holding pens” for thoseocially unable to get jobs. The new policies purport to transcend these problems, though our initial research suggests these claims may be doubtless. For example, we have noted how rather disparate, even competing interests have been “stitched together” in the new policies. The pilot “case studies” provide some insights into how these interests begin to unravel in the face of implementation pressures, particularly in the absence of administrative coordination or effective monitoring procedures. For instance, given what one interviewee referred to as the ‘AVC’ bucket mentality, there is the understandably pragmatic tendency to convert existing initiatives in any, school-industry links, into AVC-funded pilots, dressed in the language of pathways and competencies. However, the extent to which these new initiatives challenge older dead-end approaches, often with their gendered, elitistic and class underpinnings, is most unclear given the lack of scrutiny over the capacity of the projects to deliver their stated objectives. Students may yet find themselves in uncredentialed or gendered dead-ends rather than structured education and training pathways.

Additionally, some iconic new trends are emerging. For example, the most successful pilot we examined is viewed as a kind of exemplar of what can be achieved. However, it is highly resource-intensive in relation to the industry placement component and for this reason almost impossible to replicate across the system as a whole. What may ultimately emerge are thus a few showcase initiatives, successful in themselves but making little impact in a systemic provision of credentialled pathways. Associated with this is a new form of territoriality: the development and jealous preservation of particular links between schools - often the private schools - and enterprises. Yet another consequence are the arrangements some schools are making with private training providers for their “brightest” students. Ironically, then, vocational education appears to be becoming a “positioned good” in post-compulsory education and training market (Morgan 1995).

How to prevent the new agenda from becoming another channelising device whose benefits are confined by the already advantaged is, we believe, an important policy issue. The question is: who or what body is to address this? DEET currently holds the monitoring brief for the AVC pilots, but DEET itself appears to be in some disarray - “gout of sight” in the words of one interviewee. With priorities and strategies shifting, the DEET priorities document (ANT 1994) suggests that it is unlikely to play a strong interdepartmental role vis-a-vis the States. Meanwhile, there have been some loosenings of historical ties through credit transfers and cooperative arrangements between schools, TAFE and some universities, though there is still considerable resistance to this from some of the older universities. Such resistance may only exert indirect effects, via the universities’ continuing dominance of senior school curricula, given that the new policies mainly target the seventy percent of students who do not go on to university. More pertinent now are the wellbeing of technical difficulties to be resolved. In Queensland at least, the lack of effective State level co-ordination and planning to deal with these issues, together with a seeming reluctance to draw on an appropriate range of expertise (for example on equity issues or broader education issues) means that developments tend to be somewhat piecemeal, fragmented and uncoordinated.

The lack of attention to developing effective monitoring mechanisms perhaps reflects broader pressures impacting on the policy agenda: the continuing high levels of unemployment, increased school retention rates and “unmet demand” for higher education. These pressures have the potential to divert attention from the original longitudinal goals into a focus on short-term “quick fixes”. This was never more so for example in Queensland in pressure to get the agenda “up and running” and to identify “what works” at the expense of more thorough consideration of strategies for enhancing quality and accessibility. The concerns are further underlined when we reflect on the results. The nine AVC case studies (Australian Vocational Certification System, Canberra, ANZ, (Cambridge Report) Fredland, J. (1992)) “Employment and training for the school to work transition”, in T. Stoddard and G. Lees, eds, 1 Curriculum for the Senior Secondary Years, Melbourne, ACER, pp 64-86.

References