

There are many aspects of this Review that are vitally important but as a teacher in a college for 35 years, I will concentrate on comments regarding this area.

It is disappointing to say the least that people with power and influence comment on colleges with such seeming ignorance. It is stated that ‘... the Review heard that senior secondary schooling is still seen by many as a pathway towards university...’. I taught at Rosny College and the following was written about it in 1974 (FIFTY years ago). ‘It was to be a community college, with a mixture of academic, technical and leisure classes, for those intending to continue to go to university, those who wanted vocational and technical courses and the community generally’ [1].

Tasmanian colleges have been at the forefront of VET education and at Rosny College VET courses were definitely not seen as second best by students. Many of them were very competitive to enter and students were justifiably proud of their achievements.

Colleges have also offered a number of non-academic subjects in Maths, English and other areas to encourage students to continue their study at Year 11 and 12. The Workplace Skills course (a VET introductory course) has proved to be extremely popular.

I taught an ‘academic’ subject (Japanese) and over the years I saw a great change in the clientele. At the beginning of my career, I had very few students and most had their eyes on university. However, over the years, as Japanese became more popular, students came from much more diverse backgrounds. They studied Japanese because they were interested in *anime*, J-pop, and other aspects of Japanese youth culture. In the end I had academic students who counted Japanese as one of their subjects for an ATAR score for university, students for whom Japanese was their only pre-tertiary and students who studied Japanese for one or two years who opted for a non pre-tertiary result. A number of students loved Japanese because they had finally found their ‘tribe’ in class – like-minded people who shared their ideas and passions and where they felt safe. It was only by coming to a bigger school that they had been able to become part of a group.

I am very concerned about the model for adding Year 11 and 12 to each high school. It seems that there are 3 possible ways for a subject with small numbers to be taught.

1. *It is subsumed into another class (for example three Year 11 Maths students in a Year 10 class). This is unfair for the teacher concerned and will lead to inferior outcomes.*
2. *It is taken as a stand alone class. This is economically unviable.*
3. *It is taken using computer facilities where students log in from their local school. I have been involved with this kind of teaching for many years and it is VERY INFERIOR. I took Year 12 extension classes at UTAS where some students were in front of me and some were on the computer. There is no doubt that the students in the classroom had a better deal. I was available to them before and after the lesson and could answer any incidental questions that they didn't have the confidence to ask during the class. Students of this age need the contact with teachers outside class times. I recognise that in some cases there is no alternative to using computers for isolated students who otherwise would not have access to class but to force the majority of students to study this way would be deplorable.*

[1]<https://libraries.tas.gov.au>>Digital Download 14. Life in Clarence in the 1950s and 1960s

Although Tasmania is a small state, 'one size fits all' is not a sound educational approach. Some students from small country areas may opt to stay in their community to continue study in a very narrow range of subjects but many will benefit from encountering new people and places. This will present them with exciting new challenges and will give them the resilience and the expertise for success in a future that is almost certainly not going to be based around their home community.

Colleges were originally set up to allow a wide range of subjects to be taught in a small jurisdiction. Subjects such as Maths Specialised, Physics and languages were but a few examples of this. As VET gained popularity the numbers of students allowed a great deal of diversification. Colleges worked together and smaller VET courses that were unviable on their own were able to be offered at one or two colleges. Now, when suitably qualified specialist teachers are getting harder and harder to find, the college system allows many of those smaller subjects to continue.

Colleges now offer courses to Tier 3 students – this would not be possible in smaller Year 7-10 schools as there is no funding for them from the government for Year 11 and 12.

Colleges have worked closely with their feeder high schools for many years. Liaison teachers from colleges visit these schools regularly, there is always a 'taster day' where students can check out the colleges first hand and enrolments take place over a number of days so that college teachers and counsellors can discuss the prospective student's course in detail.

As this review states, '... if more students finish Year 10 on track and engaged in their learning, more would be able to complete Year 12...'. Colleges are not the main source of the problem of retention, it extends back to Years 8, 9 and 10 when many students become disengaged.

In summary, many negative aspects of colleges have been put forward by people with little understanding of how they operate and the many and varied services offered to students. Colleges have adapted to their clientele over the years and continue to deliver courses to students that are useful, pertinent and interesting. It is no surprise that most students in Year 11 have opted to go to a college rather than stay at the local high school – college can open up a challenging, exciting new phase in a student's life educationally, socially and financially.