

# Opportunities & challenges for a single tertiary education sector

Leesa Wheelahan

School of Education and Professional Studies

Griffith University

## Argument & overview

- Social, economic & policy pressure for 1 tertiary education system
- Elements being put place but still some inconsistencies
- Start - data where Australia is at – basis for where we are going
- Factors blurring sectoral divide
- 3<sup>rd</sup> period HE expansion since war – where will it come from?
- Some observations
- Implications for sectors
- What has changed/ will change?
- Remaining inconsistencies
- Data on equity & pathways – our starting point
- Challenges
- Opportunities & possibilities – framework for pathways & collaboration

## Where we are in 2008

- Of those aged between 15-64 years
  - 53% had a non school qualification (42% in 1998)
  - 22% degree or above
  - 31% adv dip or below
    - *9% adv dip/dip; 16% cert 3-4; 7% cert 1-2 & other*
  - 46% no non-school qualification
  - 74% school retention

## Government targets

- 40% of 25-34 yrs with a degree by 2025 (32% in 2008)
- halve no. 20 to 64 years without a cert III qual by 2020
  - 53% (46% no non-school qualification, 7% cert 2 or below)
- Double no. VET dips & adv dips completions by 2020
- 90% of young people with Yr 12 or equiv by 2015
- 20% low SES u/g HE students by 2020 (16% in 2007)
- halve gap for Indigenous students' attainment in Year 12 or equivalent by 2020
- What does all this mean for the sectors?

## Blurring sectoral divide driven by:

- Changes in society, economy, & labour market
- Loose 'fit' between labour market destinations & qualifications— logic of sectors hard to sustain
- Government policy & government funding
- Educational sectors increasingly defined by qualifications accredited in each
- Many universities registered as RTOs or have companies
- 10 (of 59) TAFEs registered to offer HE
- 34% senior secondary students doing VETiS
- TAFE in particular squeezed from above & below

## 3<sup>rd</sup> period HE expansion since war in Anglophone countries – where will it come from?

- 1<sup>st</sup> period – 1950s & 1960s – new universities & new HE sector
- 2<sup>nd</sup> period – 1980s – creation of a unified *university* system
- 3<sup>rd</sup> period – 2000s - through 2<sup>nd</sup>, vocational tier of tertiary education
- Rationale - vocational ‘applied’ focus, more supportive pedagogy etc

## Some observations

- US community colleges allowed US to achieve mass system decades earlier
- Instability of sectoral designations
- Claims to distinctiveness rest on applied focus & pedagogy & less on 'niche'
- Tendency to reproduce sectoral divide *within* institutions
- Boundaries can enable or constrain
- TAFE's quality will always be questioned – needs support

## What are the implications for sectors?

- Australia begin to look more like UK & US
- Universities have to reconsider relationship with TAFE
  - Compete or complement? Different views TAFE directors
- Less opportunity to negotiate over distinct *provision*
- Pathways will help increase status of HE in TAFE
- HE in TAFE can help maintain university funding
- TAFE will be a key way government meets targets, but TAFE needs public load
- Government policy will matter for shaping sectoral relations

## What has changed/will change?

- VET & HE in same 'group' in DEST
- One tertiary education ministerial council
- Skills Australia
- One regulatory body – HE by 2010, VET by 2013
- New AQF – to be included in TESQA
- HE standards
- Fee-help for VET
- Begins to look like architecture for 1 tertiary system
- More \$ available for shared projects

# Remaining inconsistencies

- Tracked post-school system
- Different curricular models not seen as a problem
- Policies about public funding & full-fee provision
- Different definitions of equity
- Different industrial awards, funding, reporting, quality assurance etc
- Look at where sectors are at re: equity & pathways

## Table 1: SES groups' share of each VET qualification level, 2001

	% low SES	% medium SES	% high SES
Cert I	33.8	51.9	14.3
Cert II	32.8	51.0	16.2
Cert III	28.2	53.0	18.8
Cert	26.2	51.5	22.3
Dip & above	19.4	53.4	27.2
All AQF quals	28.6	52.2	19.2

Table 2: Admission basis commencing u/g students in universities by SES 2007

Basis for admission	% in category	% low SES	% middle SES	% high SES
Other basis	11.6	20.0	49.5	28.3
Prior HE	23.2	14.7	46.1	37.1
Prior school	46.8	16.2	47.1	35.6
Prior VET	10.1	20.0	51.8	27.0
Mature age	5.5	27.0	52.1	20.0
Total	97.1	17.4	48.0	33.1

Table 3: Commencing u/g students by groups by % SES in 2007

University group	%SES		
	Low	Medium	High
Go8	10.9	36.4	50.9
IRU	23.0	57.7	18.3
ATN	16.3	45.4	37.3
Dual-sectors	18.2	49.5	29.8
Ungrouped 1960s & 1970s	18.7	44.9	35.0
Ungrouped Post 1988	20.0	55.8	22.4
All regional	26.1	57.2	14.9
All not Gof8	19.5	51.9	27.2
All universities	17.4	48.0	33.1

Table 4: Commencing u/g students by IRU by % SES in 2007

IRU	%SES		
	Low	Medium	High
Newcastle	31.2	56.9	11.3
La Trobe	18.9	52.4	27.9
Griffith	15.3	67.6	16.4
JCU	27.8	65.6	3.8
Murdoch	24.8	45.5	27.9
Flinders	23.7	49.4	25.7
IRU	23.0	57.7	18.3
All universities	17.4	48.0	33.1

## Table 5: Commencing u/good students by groups by admission basis 2007

University group	Other	Prior HE	Prior school	Prior VET	Mature age
Go8	6.9	24.4	62.2	2.7	1.2
IRU	7.7	23.6	45.2	9.8	11.2
ATN	8.3	22.1	52.9	10.9	3.4
Dual-sectors	9.1	21.6	46.9	17.4	3.3
Ungrouped 1960s & 1970s	10.9	27.5	40.4	11.6	7.0
Ungrouped Post 1988	22.0	20.0	31.3	15.6	6.8
All regional	23.3	25.5	26.4	11.6	7.7
All not Gof8	13.1	22.8	41.7	12.6	6.9
All universities	11.6	23.2	46.8	10.1	5.5

## Table 6 IRU by admission basis 2007

<b>IRU</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Prior HE</b>	<b>Prior school</b>	<b>Prior VET</b>	<b>Mature age</b>
Newcastle	6.0	16.2	33.9	11.4	31.6
La Trobe	1.7	24.1	58.0	13.5	0.8
Griffith	15.8	27.1	46.0	7.4	0.5
JCU	7.6	23.3	58.1	8.0	0.0
Murdoch	3.7	28.8	34.6	10.8	20.2
Flinders	5.2	26.6	47.4	6.6	8.7
IRU	7.7	23.6	45.2	9.8	11.2
All universities	11.6	23.2	46.8	10.1	5.5

## Table 7: Dual-sectors VET admission basis 2001 & 2007

	<b>2001%</b>	<b>2007%</b>
RMIT	10.5	18.7
Swinburne	11.6	27.0
Ballarat	5.3	0.6
VU	8.6	16.5
CDU	8.7	14.7
All dual-sectors	9.4	17.4
IRU	6.8	9.8
All HE	7.1	10.1

Table 8: IRU VET admission basis 2001 & 2007

	2001%	2007%
Newcastle	6.1	11.4
La Trobe	6.3	13.5
Griffith	7.4	7.4
JCU	3.8	8.0
Murdoch	14.5	10.8
Flinders	4.7	6.6
IRU	6.8	9.8
All universities	7.1	10.1

## What do the data tell us?

- VET pathways act as educational ladder of opportunity to HE, less so social ladder
- An equity problem is articulation from lower to higher level VET qualifications
- Diplomas declining or static as % VET qualifications
- Need to consider equity for *tertiary* education, not for VET & HE
- Universities can increase % VET – look at dual-sectors
  - Charles Sturt – 20% prior VET in 2007
- Requires *institutional* commitment & leadership

# Challenges

- Rethink notion of pathways - need more of same but also new approaches
- Way in which pathways relate to occupational outcomes
- Emphasise link between educational & occupational progression
- Needs greater emphasis on *educational* purposes of VET
- Requires curricular consistency
- Equity – as coherent tertiary education policy
- Policies to support expansion of HE in TAFE
- Policies to support collaboration between HE & VET
- All this needed if government targets are to be met

## Opportunities & possibilities - framework for pathways & collaboration

- Each member IRU emphasising pathways & different processes in place
- Swinburne strategy
- Literature – building zones of mutual trust
- Need institutional strategy with different elements from least to most expensive
- Institutional collaborative body that includes senior management all institutions
- ‘Boundary spanners’ crucial
- Funded appropriately