

**PATHWAYS PLANNING IN
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS
AND JUVENILES IN
CUSTODY**

THE VICTORIAN MODEL

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by

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THE VICTORIAN MODEL

“PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION”

The concept of Pathways in Education has become popular in recent times and has been used to describe a number of arrangements between sectors and/or Institutions of education. In Victoria the concept has been applied to links between the Year 12 Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and TAFE Institutes; to links between the VCE and industry as well as between TAFE and the University sector. More recently, the Commonwealth government has funded pathways between schools and TAFE under its VET in Schools program.

In these cases the concept is somewhat different to that applied in the prison system in Victoria in that the former generally seeks to make it easier to move between courses at different levels without having to repeat work already covered in a previous course. In the words of a Victorian Department of Education document (1995):

“Pathways have been developed as a deliberate Government policy because the recognition of prior study provides efficiency and equity in educational services for students. Recognition for a substantial part of a previously studied course means that students save time and money, and institutions can more efficiently plan for the learning of their students without wasting time on skills and knowledge previously learned.”

PATHWAYS IN TRAINING IN PRISONS

The 1992 Corrections Industry Training Plan (CITP) identified the need for the Victorian prison system to develop training pathways in specific vocational areas, particularly Hospitality and Horticulture and in Adult Basic Education. The rationale behind the development of the Pathways concept was twofold:

- to eliminate the waste of resources which occurred from prisoners undertaking a subject/course in one prison only to find that it was not available upon transfer to another location and
- to provide continuity in access to training in areas which had labour market potential upon release or were of use in the community

According to the 1992 Plan, the concept of training pathways entailed:

“..the identification of a line of maximum, medium and minimum security prisons through which a prisoner can proceed and maintain continuity of an accredited training program”.

The concept was also intended to deal with a major problem at the time whereby the Prisoner Classification Committee, having changed a prisoner's security rating, then moved the prisoner to another location before he/she had completed a unit or part of a course. While the generally lower security rating was welcomed by the prisoner, the lack of continuity or interruption to the course of study often resulted in the prisoner being alienated from education for the remainder of the sentence.

The Pathways concept was intended to alert the Classification system to the prisoner's educational progress and to maintain the prisoner's interest in education while in custody. In the longer term, the development of a Training Pathway would commence with the initial Classification Committee hearing and, wherever possible, be built into the Sentence Management Plan of each prisoner.

THE CORRECTIONS EDUCATION MANAGEMENT CONSORTIUM

Responsibility for ensuring greater consistency in the delivery of accredited training programs across the adult prison system rested with the Corrections Education Management Consortium, a committee of the Corrections Industry Training Board.

The Consortium comprised senior management personnel from each of the TAFE Institutes with responsibility for delivering VET programs to one or more prisons, as well as representatives from the then Office of Corrections and the then Office of the State Training Board.

By the end of 1991, a conceptual pathways model had been developed by the Consortium and had identified a single course pathway (e.g, Hospitality); a group Pathway (e.g, Kooris) and a Basic Education Pathway as options for ensuring continuity of provision for a prisoner during the term of a sentence.

By 1998, Pathways had been developed for the following industries:

- Hospitality
- Adult Basic Education
- Agriculture/Horticulture
- Engineering
- Furnishing Studies and
- Information Technology

A Pathway for Kooris in custody has also been developed.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PATHWAY IN TRAINING

The initial need to develop a Pathway in Training follows recognition that units of a curriculum (or competencies associated with a curriculum) are being delivered across a number of prison campuses or to a specific group of prisoners located across the prison system. The competencies could be popular with prisoners but not linked to any prison operations (e.g, Personal Computer/Information Technology Studies) or could be required for the purposes of prison employment (e.g, Kitchen or Ground Maintenance positions) or be relevant to the needs of a specific group (e.g, Non-English Speaking Background prisoners).

Once identified, an Institute member of the Management Consortium takes responsibility for the development of the specific Training Pathway, using the initial concept proposal as the basis for the project. Funding may be provided to the Institute for the development of the Pathway through the Office of Training and Further Education and the project would be overseen by a Consortium- appointed Steering Committee.

The Pathways proposal is not limited to the prison experience but is intended to extend to the post-release phase and include access to further training options, particularly for prisoners on parole and with reporting requirements to the Community Corrections Services sector.

The final product includes facility and equipment requirements for the successful implementation of the Pathway and these are incorporated into the annual Corrections Industry Training Plan which identifies the resource requirements for the delivery of all VET programs across the prison system.

The Corrections Industry Training Plan

The Corrections Industry Training Plan is prepared on an annual basis by the Corrections Industry Training Board to provide advice to the Office of Training and Further Education on the VET priorities for the corrections “industry” as defined by the Board. The time frame for the development of each Plan is eighteen months in advance, meaning that the corrections sector has to be able to anticipate such matters as prison population trends in both adult and juvenile sectors; prison industry developments and community corrections trends for the next eighteen to twenty-four months. This requirement is to ensure that the OTFE can estimate and negotiate for the necessary resource levels for VET provision for all recognised Industry Training sectors.

The Plan establishes the priorities for training across the corrections system and, as such, identifies new “Pathways in Training” which might be developed through new industry arrangements across prisons or emerging vocational training demands among the prisoner population. An example of the latter is the response to the growing ESL requirements of the adult male prison population.

THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY TRAINING PATHWAY: A CASE STUDY

The Hospitality Industry Training Pathway has been reviewed by the Consortium, with the Gordon Institute of TAFE managing the review process. The review covered the delivery of accredited Hospitality Industry courses to both adult and juvenile locations.

PATHWAYS IN OPERATION

1. Initial Assessment & the Sentence Management Process

Once sentenced, a prisoner in Victoria is placed at the Melbourne Assessment Prison (MAP) as a general rule and undergoes an assessment process which includes a social history, health checks and an interview by a teacher from the Kangan *Batman* Institute of TAFE. The prisoner is advised of the availability of VET programs at different prison locations and advice is then provided to the Sentence Management staff regarding options for the prisoner to pursue specific education and training interests.

Placement of a prisoner is determined by the Sentence Management group which balances the identified education and training interests against other factors, e.g, security concerns/ family visits. VET interests are also recorded in the prisoner’s Individual Management Plan (IMP) which travels with the prisoner to the next location.

Sentence Management staff provide Kangan *Batman* Institute staff with weekly lists of classification decisions which are then conveyed to the Education Centre at each prison to assist teaching staff in the preparation of lists; to give an indication of likely demand for training and for discussion with the prisoner upon arrival.

2. Orientation - First Placement

An important feature of the Pathways process has been the acknowledgment that the interview at the initial assessment phase has been followed up. Prisoners have consistently expressed surprise that their earlier expression of interest in a VET program has been conveyed to their new location and that appropriate advice is available upon arrival.

At each location, whether public or private sector operated, all newly arrived prisoners receive information from the prison's education staff regarding access to and the range of VET programs available at the prison. For prisoners arriving from another location due to Sentence Management reclassification, the orientation session provides the opportunity to indicate previous VET involvement and teaching staff to identify the next step in any established Pathway in Training. For newly sentenced prisoners, information received via MAP allows for placement in the first step of a Pathways in Training program.

3. Common Interest Groups

In recent years, teaching staff have established a number of mechanisms to improve both the flow of information and the selection of appropriate curriculum options to match each stage of the Pathways process.

One such mechanism has been the establishment of Common Interest Groups which bring together the teachers in a specific field of study and which regularly examine the existing delivery of a VET Pathway through the prison system, including available facilities and equipment needs.

The development of such groups has been encouraged by the statewide organisation, the Corrections Education Association of Victoria (CEAV) which also provides time at the annual Conference for discussion/information regarding existing or potential VET Pathways. The 1997 Conference was responsible for the establishment of a Working Group to develop a Pathway in Training for prisoners from a Non-English Speaking Background which will be linked to the Adult Basic Education Pathway.

4. Evaluation

The Management Consortium has undertaken one evaluation project of the impact of the Pathways in Training program and examined the extent to which an adult prisoner was able to follow an expressed interest in a VET program/course from initial classification to the end of his/her time in prison. The results of the evaluation project were reported at a workshop at the IFEPS Conference in Hobart in November 1995 by Ron Wilson, the Chairperson of the Consortium at that time.

In light of the changes which have taken place in the methods of initial assessment and classification since that evaluation, along with the advent of VET delivery to the private sector owned and operated prisons in the adult sector, it may be advantageous for the Consortium to undertake another evaluation project later in 1998.