

EDUCATING INSIDE-OUT - VET IN JUVENILE DETENTION

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Cavan Education Centre is a Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) school located within Adelaide's Cavan Training Centre (CTC). CTC is a secure detention facility operated by the Department for Family and Youth Services (FAYS) for juvenile male offenders aged 16+. CTC, opened a little over 6 years ago, accommodates 36 residents in individual en-suite bedrooms arranged in 3 units of 12. Security, although high, is unobtrusive, with the buildings providing their own secure perimeter. Facilities for residents include full-sized gymnasium with weight training mezzanine, indoor pool (inefficiently heated), outdoor secure recreation area, Horticulture area (external to security) and, most importantly from my point of view, a school integrated into the main structure of the establishment.

Despite the age range of residents pulling them all beyond the age of compulsion, all are expected to attend Education programmes 5 days a week, 50 weeks per year. The Education Centre receives staffing and funding factors to permit this extended operation.

Upon entry to the school, new residents are quietly assimilated into the school's General programme and "go with the flow" from lesson to lesson. As soon as is practicable, each resident will undergo basic testing to give a broad indication of literacy, numeracy and social competence. As part of this induction process, residents are asked of any special interests aspirations or weaknesses and the information drawn to the attention of the relevant teachers. The process includes VET counseling during which the vocational options provided by the Education Centre are outlined and indications of interest invited.

Students then continue in the General programme which includes Art, Ceramics, Home Economics, Physical Education, Woodwork, Metalwork, General Studies, Science, Computing, Health, Traffic Studies, Magazine

The general curriculum not only provides a broad base for further study, but also is the means by which we hope to re-engage students with the learning process. Teachers are sympathetic to the residents' situation, providing a range of activities and learning styles to cater for the range of ability, interest and apprehension present in their classes. The focus is very much on what the resident *can* do, not what he cannot, and even the most reluctant of new residents soon finds that school is not a bad place to be, that he will do things and learn things that make him feel good about himself and that his peers seem to have a positive view of what might happen in a school day.

One feature of the "general" curriculum is the absence of subjects called "reading", "Literacy", "Mathematics" and the like. There is a tendency to see the correlation between low literacy/numeracy abilities and high offending levels as cause and effect. That is, the vast majority of offenders are poor readers, spellers, and calculators, so if we can teach them to read and add (but not, heaven forbid, multiply), then we will stop them offending. However, our belief is that poor school achievement and offending behaviour are both symptoms of a deeper malaise related to self-image, relationships and recognition of boundaries. To force these young people to sit through formally labeled "English" or "Maths" lessons is to confront them directly with two of the major reasons they hated school and took every opportunity to avoid it.

Consequently, our approach is to include appropriate literacy and numeracy teaching within other areas of the curriculum and to offer extra sessions for those who want to improve basic skills. Our timetable includes a session called "Lesson 7" at the end of the school day. This is a voluntary session when residents can work 1-1 or 2-1 with a teacher on an area of need - formal courses like SRA's "Morphographic Spelling", "Literacy for Youth", devised and written by Julie Harwood, Literacy Coordinator at Cavan,

or, more usually, on home-grown reading, writing, arithmetic or general educational study. Students may write letters, complete Tech Studies or Art projects, print a birthday card or seek tutorial help with external courses they might be undertaking.

Despite focusing on areas of weakness and discomfort, lesson 7s are enormously popular. Demand exceeds capacity to supply, and indicates the value of relationship building, trust and confidence.

This leads to another important curriculum area - timetabled "Special" lessons when teachers have choice of students to work on specific areas. These include fitness, dance, public art projects, puppetry, guitar, sex education, Aboriginal studies and extension of work done in "General" classes. Students have some input through liaising with teachers for inclusion in any "specials" that might be of interest on the understanding that students cannot get out of things they don't like, but will, if their behaviour level (and determination of levels is another story) is good, they can get more of what they like or need. "Specials" also include short courses such as gaining of licenses (Learner's Permit, "P" plates, Ridersafe, Boat Operator, Bobcat, Forklift, Backhoe), First Aid, support for students enrolled in mainstream courses through the Open Access College and any of a myriad of short-term courses developed to meet specific needs.

Over and above General and Special lessons, the school provides specific vocational education and training in Automotive, Hospitality, and Horticulture in particular, with some Retail, Office Skills and Engineering (General). Although different teachers take responsibility for different modules within the courses (for example, our OHSW rep. takes generic OHSW modules for all when needed), in the main, specialist teachers conduct the training. All staff have gained workplace trainer and assessor qualifications and our Hospitality teacher in particular, has undertaken additional training to meet the exacting requirements of the world-renowned Regency Park School of Hospitality. In addition, three teachers and one youth worker are qualified driving instructors, two of the teachers are also Ridersafe instructors and one is an accredited examiner with Motor Registration Division and able to conduct Learner's and Boat Operator's tests. This dual accreditation enables the teaching of courses which simultaneously gain credit towards the SA Certificate of Education (SACE) and appropriate industry qualifications.

Priority has been given to establishing accreditation links for these courses so that residents emerge with certification which articulates with industry, employment and further training. These alliances have shifted with time, but have included such bodies as the Automotive Industry Training Board, the Brookway Park School of Horticulture, various TAFE institutes and several industrial training organisations.

Cavan has embraced the notion of accreditation enthusiastically, particularly when that accreditation is external. Official recognition is highly motivating to those for whom formal education has been a trial, and may explain the popularity of the school's Boat Operator's Licence courses, even among residents who will never drive a boat for the rest of their lives.

Therefore when that recognition comes without bars, from an external source BUT is taught by the teachers residents already know and trust AND could be used for further study AND, especially, could help get a job, the continuing popularity of VET is guaranteed.

Using DEET teachers and the school's infrastructure to deliver VET is a particularly effective mechanism at Cavan. Flexible teaching methodology can cater for continuous entry and exit of students, cover absence due to court appearances, behavioural blips or changing priorities. Residents can also, in most cases, maintain involvement in other areas of the curriculum and can even change vocational horses mid-race as they discover more about the courses and themselves.

However it would be erroneous to believe that the school has worked alone to achieve success. The most obvious partner has been FAYS, the host organisation and managers of the Cavan Training Centre. FAYS youth workers attend school sessions, providing behavioural intervention or support when required, encourage residents to avail themselves of the opportunities the school can provide, advocate for residents keen to undertake particular studies and join in lessons where they feel comfortable. A youthworker

manages the Horticulture programme, in which two of our teachers provide the accredited training to support the broader horticultural activities. For some time, another youth worker with appropriate credentials participated in virtually all Hospitality sessions.

Another major area of cooperation has been at Management level, where relaxing attitudes to overt security have seen, for example, the establishment of a Horticulture complex outside of the Centre's secure perimeter and revised procedures for permitting residents to participate. The Centre's Movements Meeting, held weekly is attended by the school's Coordinator of external programmes, is the mechanism for locally approved leaves. Through this process residents can gain leave to attend appropriate training (eg off-site forklift training) or work experience and even paid work to complement their Centre-based studies.

In addition, the school has been involved in several initiatives to establish links with employers and pathways to employment. The first of these was an automotive training project begun in April 1995. This project resulted in 4 of its first 8 residents released gaining permanent employment, one voluntarily withdrawing and 3 reoffending and subsequently returning to the Centre

From this beginning, funding was successfully sought for "Breakthru", which was established later in 1995. Breakthru was a 2-year programme whose main characteristics were

- Engaging a project manager to oversee the programme
- Employment in industry growth areas
- Provision of accredited training
- Intensive support for young people placed in employment
- Strong commitment by individual employers and industry bodies
- Commitment of resources by state and commonwealth governments
- Cost effective relative to other programmes for disadvantaged young people

Breakthru was resourced through State in the form of salaries, training, vehicle and materials and the then Commonwealth Dept of Employment, Education and Training, DEET, in grants.

Breakthru's statistical results for the period June 1995 – June 1997 were:

Total number of participants	85	100%
No participants gaining full time employment	53	62%
No participants doing further training	7	8%
No participants moving interstate on release	6	7%
No participants reoffended prior to starting work	7	8%
No participants reoffended after starting work	1	1.5%
No participants on home detention	1	1.5%
No participants back in mainstream school	1	1.5%
No participants known to be currently employed or in further training#	36	42%

#Due to mobility of the client group and the expiry of formal supervision orders, it was not possible to maintain contact with the entire cohort. The real figure could well be significantly higher.

Some interesting observations include:

- 73 % of participants were successfully placed in full time employment or further training
- of the 8 participants who did reoffend, 7 did so prior to commencing work
- of the 60 who undertook full time employment or training, at least 36 (60%) were still employed or in training

One of the hopes of Breakthru was that the program would become self funding through becoming an Employment Placement Enterprise. Our figures suggested that by focusing on Flex 3 customers mainly but not exclusively from juvenile detention, the enterprise would succeed in meeting the employment needs of our client group in a self-sustaining manner. Unfortunately, our application in partnership with FAYS, was unsuccessful, and the demise of DEET saw the breaking of Breakthru in November of 1997

Fortunately, at the same time as breakthrough was in its death throes, the then Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) commenced its *Ready, Set, Go* programme. Comprising \$8.8 million State Government money and \$3 million Commonwealth funding for the New Apprenticeships scheme, *Ready, Set, Go* provided funding direct to schools (49%), to school districts (30%) to professional Development (13%) with smaller amounts for Coordination costs, Program and Service Development and Research.

One category of direct grants to schools was for Students at Risk Workplacement Programs. A group of 4 schools in alternative settings, which had already formed a loose cluster because of the overlap of their client groups, was successful in its application for a slice of this largesse. These schools comprised

- Bowden-Brompton Community School, DETE's specialist behaviour management school
- Cavan Education Centre
- Magill Education Centre, a DETE school within the Magill Training Centre, a remand and detention Centre for juvenile female and younger, less experienced male offenders
- Warriappendi School, a DETE school with an Aboriginal focus.

All schools in the cluster feature flexible delivery of non-standard curriculum to students characterised by aggressive, frequently violent behaviour who have identified learning difficulties and have been school refusers. The great majority come from dysfunctional or broken families, have significant drug/alcohol usage and are risk takers. Their grasp of basic educational skills is tenuous or non-existent, and they have negative attitudes to schools and learning.

Programmes need to accommodate these characteristics, along with the knowledge that a disproportionately high number are Aboriginal, an increasing proportion Asian and a significant number from remote or isolated communities, despite all 4 schools being in the metropolitan area.

The schools decided that the best way to meet their *Ready, Set, Go* needs was to engage the services of the Breakthru project manager, and this was eventually done, with difficulty, through the establishment of a Contract for Service Between the Minister of Education and Children's Services and the project manager's company.

The key components of the task were

- to provide employment opportunities, links with job brokers, work experience and industry links
- to provide pre-employment preparation and training that dovetails with the school programmes
- To monitor and mentor students placed into employment, advocate on their behalf and link them with support agencies within the community
- To align delivery of modules across the cluster and develop employment pathways into industry with definite employment potential
- to assist in the development of training and employment packages which suit "students at risk"
- to locate, evaluate and prepare suitable employers willing to participate in the work experience programme
- to provide on-going training and development for teaching staff.

As of August of this year, programme outcomes are:

Type of employment	Number
Work experience	77
Part time employment	13
Full time employment	53
Forklift licence	54
Backhoe licence	7
Further training eg TAFE	11

Some implementation difficulties and actions in response were:

DIFFICULTIES	ACTIONS
Government inter-agency red tape	<i>Legislation and policy changes being investigated</i>
Rolling intake/exit of students	<i>Short term, computer assisted , self paced learning courses eg tyrefitting course</i>
Lack of developed training materials in some industry sectors	<i>Developed own material in conjunction with industry</i>
Staff having limited rapport with current industry trends	<i>In-servicing of staff, industry visits by staff</i>
Students coping with demands of a full day's physical work	<i>Students doing work experience for only 3 consecutive days</i>
Lack of transport facilities between sites and industry	<i>Use of government vehicles where possible</i>
Lack of support for STAR in the new employment system	<i>Formed working partnership with a Job Broker and promoted policy changes</i>
Limited funds for consumables used in training, eg hospitality	<i>Pursued funding and sponsorship from external sources</i>
Reading age and presentation of some industry modules	<i>Developed materials and teaching methodologies to suit the students</i>
Lack of cooperation between some schools	<i>Projects amended to be school-based Parent requests when reluctant to have cross-campus interaction were respected</i>
Inability of students to move freely across sites	<i>Staff movement across campuses, replication of projects, in-servicing of staff. Successfully advocated policy changes re student movement</i>
Working within conditional restraints placed by courts	<i>Gained confidence, support and cooperation of judges by demonstrating success</i>
Limited funds for expensive TAFE examinations, esp Hospitality	<i>Alternative funding source found</i>
Establishing Contract for Service for provision of employment services to students	<i>Persistence and personal interaction to facilitate communication between DETE departments</i>

As with its predecessor "Breakthru", the *Ready Set Go* programme is nearing the end of its funding period. Indications are that *Ready Set Go* will be maintained to some degree, although somewhat diminished from its current glory and certainly with less direct funding for Students At Risk projects. Meetings shortly after the time of writing will provide a clearer picture, but it is almost certain that our programme must conclude in its present form.

Meanwhile, the Minister for Youth Affairs has provided \$100 000 for a Supported Training and Employment Program, STEP, which is jointly managed by FAYS and DETE.

STEP provides 2-week training courses in a shopfront location in Adelaide's north-western suburbs.

Targeted participants are young offenders or those at risk of offending, and to date arranging leave and transport for Cavan's participants in STEP has not proven insurmountable.

STEP also provides each participant with mentor support in finding, pursuing, winning and keeping employment, an aspect that is essential for long term success. Without informed and interested support, newly employed young people can fall at any number of hurdles – budgeting, getting to work on time, differences of opinion with workmates, drug or alcohol binges, relationship difficulties and so on.

At present, due to injury to STEP's coordinator, results have been mixed, and the jury is still out. However, the programme has definite potential and could be a creative way forward for actual or potential offenders.

From the point of view of Cavan teachers, increasing emphasis on VET has had enormous benefits. Residents who leave to employment or structured training have proven far less likely to reoffend than their unqualified, unemployed peers have. It has had a strong influence on curriculum development, teaching methodology and school organisation.

The VET has treated the whole animal, not just a few symptoms.