

# **Vocational education and training in schools as an alternative mode of assessment**

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It is well known that traditional, academically-oriented methods of teaching and assessment do not suit all secondary school students, particularly those who are unlikely to undertake further study after completing schooling. In some cases, academic approaches – particularly traditional, written examinations - cause students to leave school early or to become disengaged and disenchanting.

One response to this issue in Australia was the development, particularly in the 1980s, of subjects which used more flexible approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. However, a further step was taken in the late 1990s when it was agreed that the competency-based methods of teaching and assessment used in post-compulsory vocational education and training (VET) would be extended to upper secondary school students, with provision for successfully completed VET subjects and courses to count as credit towards the senior secondary certificate. This initiative, known as VET in Schools, has proved extremely popular with almost half of upper secondary students now undertaking VET subjects as part of their upper secondary program.

This paper will examine the nature and extent of the take-up of VET in Schools programs and will present some of the research findings relating to VET in Schools. It will be argued that there is an important place for the VET approach to teaching and assessment in all upper secondary school systems.