



## Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: Foundation for Young Australians  
Submitting as a: Other (Not for profit)  
State: Vic.

### Summary

The types of skills that young people will need in order to thrive in the future workforce are changing. Australia's skills and education systems will need to be increasingly responsive to ensure that our labour force is suitably skilled to take up opportunities. Formal qualifications and technical skills are only part of the story, with skills such as communication, collaboration, problem solving, emotional judgement, professional ethics and global citizenship identified as the skills or capabilities that will equip young people to thrive in this new work order. These skills are now being prioritised by policy makers globally to reform curriculum and are increasingly sought after by employers.

There is an urgent need for a comprehensive and intergenerational investment in Australia's young people that would encompass:

A nation building non-partisan focused education strategy to redesign and reform the learning system and curriculum from preschool through higher education (and beyond) to ensure their competitiveness in the 21st Century

A new commitment to the teaching and learning of enterprise skills, capabilities and attributes. This must include investing in outcomes measurement, assessment and evaluation to ensure accountability measures at all levels within the system drive and support evidence-based practice.

Enterprise education and enhancing student capabilities will necessitate having a good understanding of personalised and product-oriented learning processes. Education systems and school leaders must support and enable new student-teacher relationships where learning is no longer teacher-dependent but teacher-enabled.

The culture, structures and processes of schools, and resourcing opportunities and constraints available must ensure relevant entrepreneurial learning opportunities are available to all students.

School curricula and learning environments must be reconfigured to match increasing student demands, ensuring their offerings are relevant and high-quality.

## Main submission

### Enabling schools, enacting capabilities

The demand for graduates with critical capabilities, such as creativity, critical thinking and advanced problem-solving, collaboration and communication skills, is unprecedented and continuing to grow (World Economic Forum 2016, OECD 2016). One of the most important skills young people will need is identifying and solving problems (Foundation for Young Australians 2016).

Learning and innovation skills are the skills most often cited when referring to 21st century skills (also known as capabilities or enterprise skills). They are increasingly being recognised as attributes that separate students who are prepared for a more and more complex life and work environment in the 21st century, from those who are not. These specifically include:

- Critical thinking and problem solving, e.g., effectively analyse and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims and beliefs; solve different kinds of non-familiar problems in both conventional and innovative ways.
- Communication, e.g., articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral and written communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.
- Collaboration, e.g., demonstrate ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams.
- Creativity and innovation, e.g., use a wide range of idea creation techniques to create new and worthwhile ideas.

Yet explicit enterprise education is limited in Australian schools. With only 1 in 10 teachers receiving professional development in project and inquiry based approaches to learning, there is an urgent need to ensure our educators are equipped to help students' build their skills portfolio. Young Indigenous people, and young people from disadvantaged, regional and remote areas, are even less likely to access the limited opportunities provided through school based programs to develop these essential skills.

To drive universal outcomes, skills need to be provided in ways that young people want to learn: through experience, immersion and with peers. Critical to this will be significant investment in enterprise education within our education system. Evidence of clear linkages between enterprise education and entrepreneurial activity has continued to emerge. This data shows that among Australian 18-24 year olds, almost 20% of young people who received enterprise education at school went on to become entrepreneurs, compared with less than 10% for those who didn't receive

enterprise education. This carried over to the 25-34 year old age group where around 25% who had received enterprise education went on to become entrepreneurs compared with 15% for those who didn't.

This confirms the need for enterprise education to be imbedded in the national curriculum from primary school onwards. In particular, enterprise skills, especially problem solving, creativity and social intelligence need to be embedded in school curricula as general capabilities as well as in individual subject curriculum. Whilst the inclusion of general capabilities within the Australian curriculum has been a positive inclusion, further development and explicit teaching of enterprise skills and capabilities and their measurement and assessment must also be implemented. This needs to occur from early primary school and throughout high school and be supported by a parallel process involving the changes to teaching methods that support problem solving capabilities.

Working with students, teachers, parents, employers and communities, FYA has co-designed and delivered programs that develop enterprise skills and introduce young people to the world of work and entrepreneurship.

#### Case Study: \$20 Boss

FYA has put our extensive research into practice over the past 3 years delivering and refining a series of programs to build these enterprise skills with more than 20,000 students in over 500 secondary schools nationally. One example of how enterprise skills can work in action is our \$20 Boss program, where high school students are given a \$20 loan to start their first business venture. With a \$20 loan, students develop a business concept and gain financial literacy, business and digital skills to run their business for a month. \$20 Boss is mapped to the national curriculum and delivered by teachers via an e-learning platform. \$20 Boss has now been delivered in 387 schools with 16,562 students engaged from every state and territory in Australia. The impact of this program is significant. In 2016 91% of students learned they can start their own business and 81% of teachers felt their students developed financial and business literacy skills.

Australian employers are already demanding enterprise skills young employees as critical for the jobs of the future. Where these capabilities were once seen as the domain of senior managers and marketing teams, the requirement for these skills now extends across organisations. FYA's New Basics Report (2016) found that employers value enterprise skills more and are willing to pay a premium for job seekers who have them.

The report found that future jobs will demand transferable enterprise skills such as communication, critical thinking and presentation skills 70% more than jobs of the past, with demand for these critical thinking skills has risen 158% in early-career job

ads in the last three years alone. It further uncovered that early-career job ads requiring presentation skills pay an average of A\$8,853 more than those that don't.

The New Basics report uncovered the critical skills being demanded by employers:

Digital literacy is up by 212%

Creativity is up by 65%

Critical thinking is up by 158%

Presentation skills are up by 23%

Not only is the demand for these skills increasing, but jobs that require enterprise skills also pay more:

- Jobs that ask for presentation skills will pay an extra \$8,853 / year
- Jobs that ask for digital literacy will pay an extra \$8,648 / year
- Jobs that request problem solving will pay an extra \$7,745 / year.

Whilst the demand from employers is clear, more needs to be done with educators, industry and government working together to ensure young people will be equipped with the skills they need for future jobs.

Recent research has highlighted the growing demand for these skills or capabilities (Deloitte, Cit GPS, FYA). which are inherently portable. Globally as well as locally a gap exists between the demand and supply of people with these skills. FYA research has shown that employers are increasingly willing to pay a premium for enterprise skills, up to \$8,000 more for an employee with strong communication skills for example. A quarter of entry-level employers report having difficulty filling vacancies because applicants lack employability skills (Department of Employment 2016).

Creating opportunities for young people to develop, value and learn enterprise skills outside of the classroom is urgently required. FYA recommends the development of a national enterprise skills and careers strategy that would help re-shape education in Australia. A national enterprise skills strategy would ensure students across Australia are developing enterprise skills inside and outside the classroom, and measure and assess these skills alongside the ATAR.

A national enterprise skills education strategy should adhere to the following principles:

- Begin early in primary school and build consistently, year on year, throughout high school
- Be provided in ways that young people want to learn: through experience, immersion and with peers

- Involve rethinking teacher training, methodologies and professional development
- Provide accurate information and exposure about where future jobs will exist and the skills to craft and navigate multiple careers
- Engage students, schools, industry and parents in co-designing opportunities in and outside the classroom.

### Lifelong Learning and Educational Ecosystems

FYA's New Work Mindset Report shows that to equip themselves for the future young people must focus on identifying and developing their transferable skills and capabilities rather than working towards a particular 'job'. Recent research has revealed that young Australians entering the workforce today might have as many as 5 different careers and make 17 changes in employers over their working lives. It is commonly viewed that moving from one occupation to another is onerous and the costs to both employers and job seekers high. However, our research has found that jobs are more related than we might think, not all jobs require the acquisition of an entirely new skill set and the skill sets of many jobs are in fact 'portable' to other jobs. This is because, for many jobs, employers demand very similar skills.

The report has uncovered the need for policy-makers and educators to reflect this more dynamic future of work where linear careers will be far less common and young people will need a portfolio of skills and capabilities, including career management skills to navigate the more complex world of work.

By understanding that jobs are more related and that skills are more portable between jobs than previously realised, there is an opportunity to be more strategic in navigating dynamic working lives. Rather than seeing learning as a one-off process before our first job or as a radical retraining to pivot careers, young people can build a portfolio of skills within a job cluster and target key learning areas to open up related job and career opportunities throughout their life course. This mindset shift is required not just of young people but of employers, educators, parents and policy makers.

On the supply side, young people can think about how their existing skills would be valuable for multiple different roles. On the demand side, employers could consider the breadth of potential candidates from different occupations with similar skills. If this mindset shift was to take place, we might view the debate around a skills mismatch differently: training for one occupation and working in another occupation would not be a 'mismatch' if a person was deploying a relevant skillset.

### The ecosystem of education

In order to facilitate the teaching of skills and capabilities, our understanding of education systems must change. We must understand and articulate education as a

complex eco-system rather than the old 'supply and demand' institutional system (teachers/students). The previously tightly held borders between systems across development lines such as those between early childhood, primary school, secondary school and tertiary education need to become porous for us to create seamless connections and design future 'life of learning' paths for all.

Understanding education systems as ecosystems means taking a more dynamic approach to the educational context, encompassing not just the specific components of learners, teachers, classrooms and learning materials, but critically including the dynamics between all these components. To illustrate a school would have to look at 'why' and 'how' relationships are created – for example between lecturers and students (e.g., cooperation versus authority), between students and external actors (e.g. entrepreneur visits, testimonials, extended learning environments), or how learning material, digital infrastructure and aids are used to support learning (e.g. use of IT, prototyping). Perceiving schools as living environments allows for interactions between learners, educators and the community of people surrounding the environment, with the later partnerships approach to education critical to transforming existing systems.

In this way, learning can go beyond the classroom. and school can engage industry and the wider community as genuine learning partners. The Foundation for Young Australians believes the education system should be reconfigured to encompass teachers and educators, subject matter experts, industry and blended learning experiences that can better reflect the range of cognitive and non cognitive skills, capabilities and immersive learning experiences student learners now require.

#### Case Study: World of Work (WOW)

WOW is a national initiative that builds the skills and belief young people need to make successful transitions into life beyond school. Over the three-day program, young people learn enterprising skills such as communication, problem solving, teamwork and interpersonal skills, self-awareness and confidence through an engaging and innovative program design. The participants also take part in three workplace visits with different businesses across multiple industries. Through these workplace sessions, they have the opportunity to learn about career pathways in a facilitated and fun environment with employees. WOW students use 'enquiry learning' to explore the question "What does it take to succeed in life and work?" The program enhances their understanding of the changing world of work, builds their capacities and confidence to participate in the workplace, and cultivates skills for lifelong career development. The face to face program launched in 2007 and has worked with over 6,700 students. The program has strong evaluation outcomes, and has built positive rapport with a strong and vast network of schools and teachers across Australia. The online program has reached over 10,000 students from 450+ schools.

## New Smarts

In *The New Work Smarts: Thriving in the New Work Order*, FYA's latest research predicts how everyday work activities in Australia will change by 2030. To prepare young people for this future requires an urgent shift in understanding of what it will mean to be smart in the 'new work order'. The 'new work smarts' will involve smart thinking, smart doing and smart learning:

**Smart learning.** By 2030, people will spend more hours learning on the job than ever before, responding to new technology and information when making decisions.

**Smart thinking.** People will need to be better problem solvers and communicators, and draw on science, maths and technology knowledge, and

**Smart doing.** People will work more flexibly, including through digital work platforms, and will rely less on being managed or told what to do.

Building on previous research, this new report points the way for young people towards study and work choices that will help them build the transferable skills they will need to work in a job cluster of their interest. As technology reduces the need for workers to complete routine, manual tasks they will spend more time focusing on people, solving more strategic problems and thinking creatively. There will be a stronger focus on being more collaborative, and using more entrepreneurial and critical thinking skills. Importantly, this new working smart mindset has its foundations in the ability of employees and job seekers to embrace the concept of life-long learning.

### Recommendations:

To ensure young Australians are prepared and equipped for their futures there is an urgent need for a comprehensive and intergenerational investment in Australia's young people that would encompass:

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A new commitment to the teaching and learning of enterprise skills, capabilities and attributes. This must include investing in outcomes measurement, assessment and evaluation to ensure accountability measures at all levels within the system drive and support evidence-based practice.

Enterprise education and enhancing student capabilities will necessitate having a good understanding of personalised and product-oriented learning processes. Education systems and school leaders must support and enable new student-teacher relationships where learning is no longer teacher-dependent but teacher-enabled.

The culture, structures and processes of schools, and resourcing opportunities and constraints available must ensure relevant entrepreneurial learning opportunities are available to all students.

Students will increasingly become consumers of learning and will increasingly demand agency over their learning in order to understand, articulate and own their own learning experiences. School curricula and learning environments must be reconfigured to match this demand, ensuring their offerings are relevant and high-quality.