



Dusseldorp Forum Report

The Case for Inclusive Learning Systems (Ani Wierenga & Jo Taylor, 2015).

The report is a synthesis of the current work of practitioners, researchers and policy-makers. Some of the more significant findings include:

- 1** In Australia in 2014, there were 2,083,119 young people in primary school and 1,506,867 in secondary school. It is estimated that approximately one in five young people of high school age is out of school, although accurate data is difficult to obtain. Meanwhile, nationally, there are over 900 flexible learning programs, educating over 70,000 students each year. Edmund Rice Education Australia currently has 19 Flexible Learning Centres educating approximately 2,000 students.
- 2** 'The Case' is based on a series of national consultations, a review of research evidence and a review of current policy and practice.
- 3** The report argues for flexible and inclusive learning systems, accessible to all young Australians.
- 4** There is a growing body of research evidence revealing that Australia's school-based education systems alone are not meeting the needs of significant numbers of young people.
- 5** Australian research shows that 20% of Australian high-school-aged individuals are not attending school, and the international PISA research has revealed that a further 20% of Australian young people say they feel they do not belong in their school.
- 6** Research patterns have shown that those who miss out in education are more likely to be from low SES backgrounds, Aboriginal or rural.
- 7** Across Australia, innovative educators and practitioners have developed effective models to engage the students who would otherwise have dropped out of education, offering vital pathways for them to remain engaged in learning and to transition to further learning and/or employment.
- 8** The key is not about a proliferation of programs, but recognising and supporting flexible and inclusive learning approaches as significant and legitimate parts of Australian education systems.

9 A flexible system that allows and encourages access to learning spaces both inside and outside schools may well suit the needs and capabilities of a significant number of students and increase the likelihood of those young people remaining connected to education and engaged in learning.

10 A rapidly growing body of evidence shows that flexible learning options can and do work well.

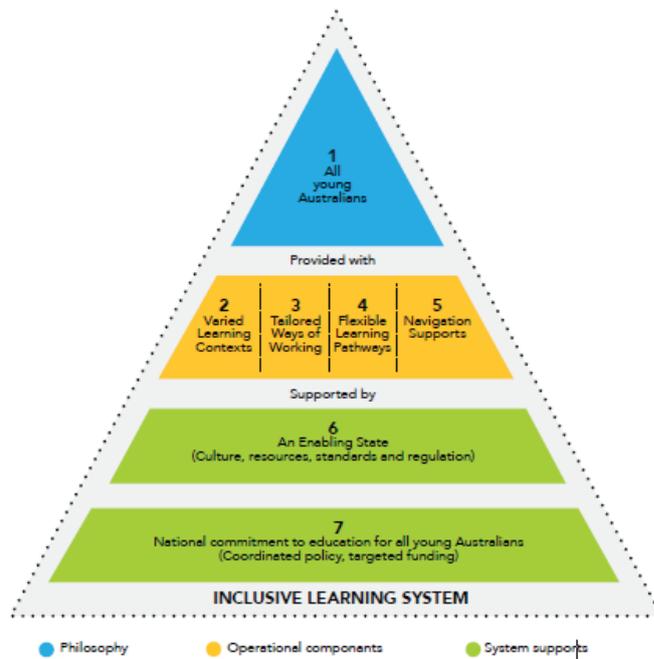
11 One in four of all young Australians are currently disengaged from both fulltime education and employment. This high rate of disengagement has not shifted much over decades, despite long periods of economic growth.

12 Only 74% of 20-24 year-olds from low socio-economic backgrounds complete Year 12 or equivalent, compared with 94% of 20-24 year-olds from high socio-economic backgrounds.

13 **Why this matters.** Having an education system that works for all young people is critical to young people and vital to Australia's future productivity, prosperity and social inclusion. It is well accepted at both policy and practice levels that participation in education has significant economic, social and civic benefits for individuals, families and communities. Education, also, has positive health and wellbeing outcomes that impact at individual, family and community levels. In terms of the economic return on greater participation, in 2005, Applied Economics undertook a cost-benefit analysis which showed that reducing the number of early school leavers and increasing equivalent retention rates from 80% to 90% would boost annual GDP by 1.1% or \$10 billion by 2040, with a consequent benefit to government revenue equating to just over a 23% share of that increase. A more recent example of one program's economic return is from Hands on Learning Australia.

The Deloitte Access Economics Evaluation of this flexible learning program reveals \$12 return for every \$1 of investment.

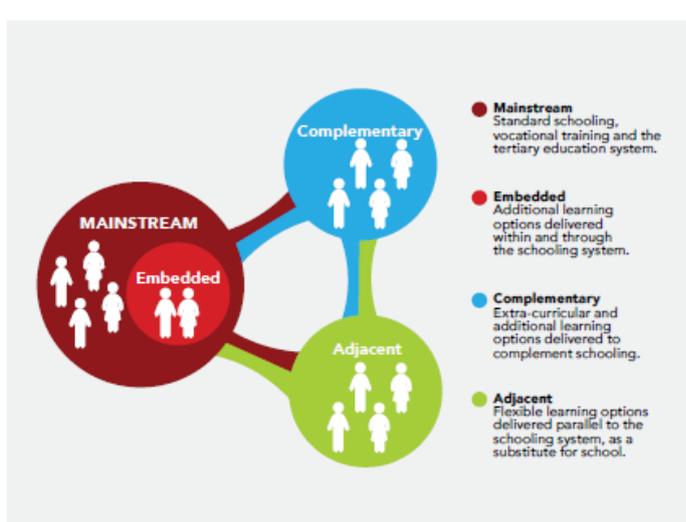
FIGURE 2 – ATTRIBUTES OF AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING SYSTEM*



14 A time for system-level action. It is time to think about the system in a different way, to refigure the role of policies and funding practices and to structure and manage the different elements as integrated, inclusive education systems. Significant improvement in student outcomes also requires a range of systems to work more effectively together including education, health and community services.

15 Attributes of an Inclusive Learning System. An inclusive learning system needs to provide all learners with access to learning options appropriate to them.

FIGURE 5 – DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEARNING CONTEXTS*

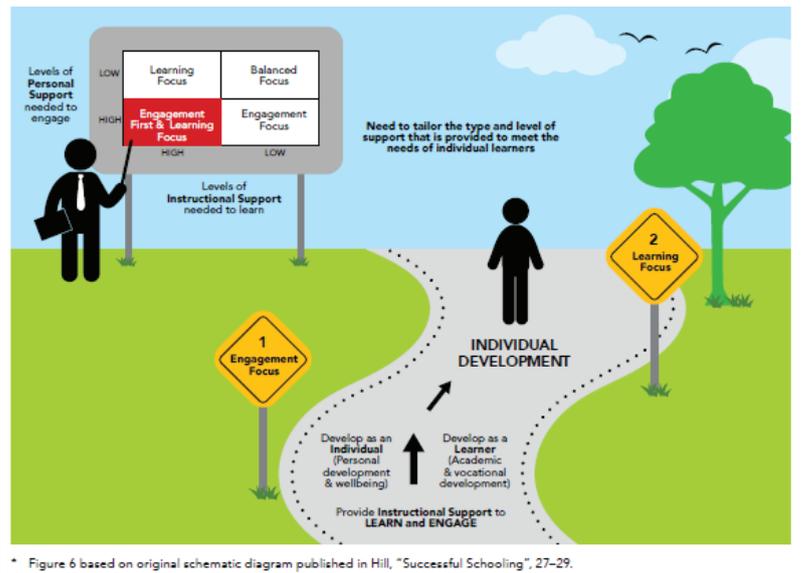


* Figure 5 Schematic diagram developed by Regina Hill, Effective Philanthropy, 2012.

16 Different Types of Learning Contexts

17 Tailoring Learning Opportunities to the Learner. Some young people face a range of barriers and challenges to learning. Young learners explain how this dual approach from educators, offering support first and learning second, has made education accessible to them.

FIGURE 6 – TAILORING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET THE LEARNER WHERE THEY ARE AT*



* Figure 6 based on original schematic diagram published in Hill, "Successful Schooling", 27-29.

18 20% of young people do not follow the linear K-12 pattern through school.

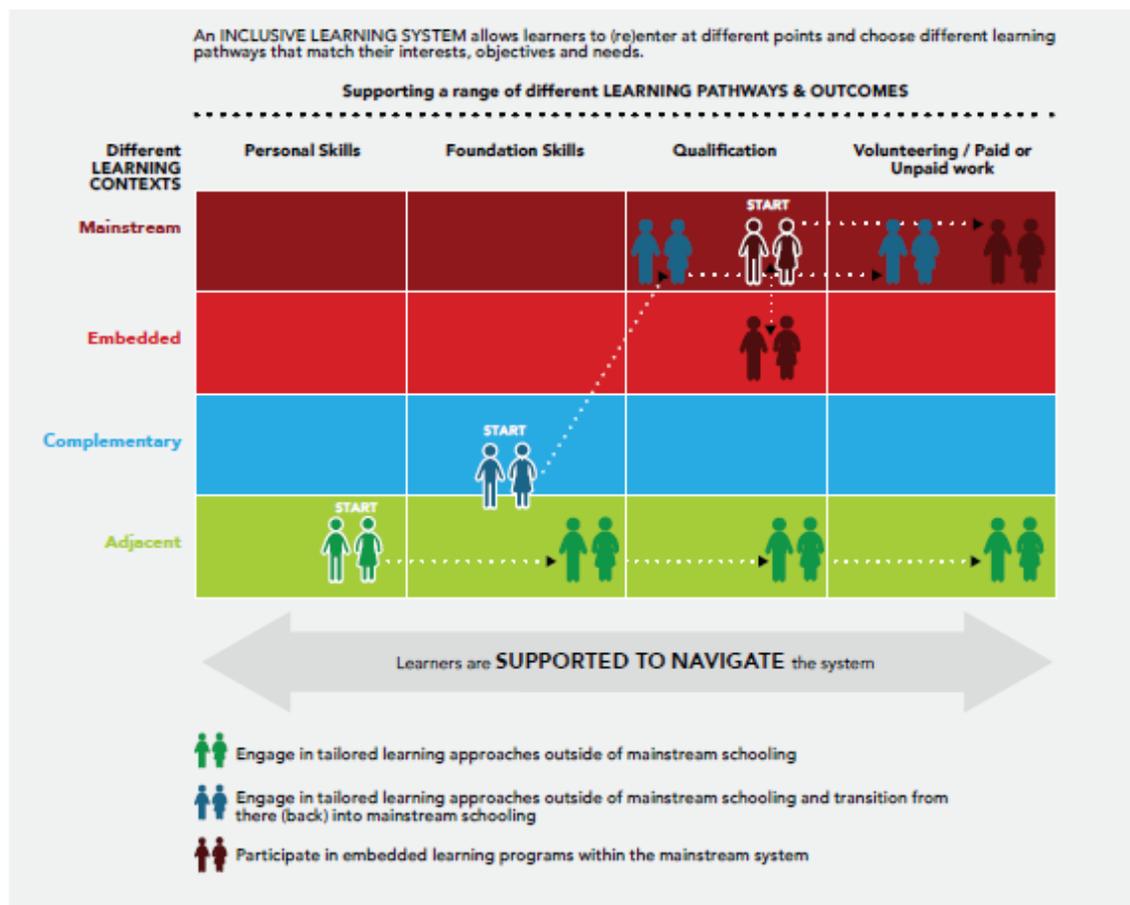
19 To be effective, the education system needs to provide appropriate navigation supports for learners to help them to overcome entry and transition point barriers and support them to translate learning outcomes into improved life and career outcomes.

Potential to develop support with CatholicCare.

20 BOSTES has been focusing on making flexible pathways available to students in the senior years of schooling.

21 Flexible Learner Pathway Map. Conclusion of 'The Case': education systems need to recognise learner diversity and provide learning opportunities that fit the learners, rather than require the learners to fit the system.

FIGURE 8 – FLEXIBLE LEARNER PATHWAY MAP*



* Schematic diagram developed by Regina Hill, Effective Philanthropy, 2012.

“ In response to Recommendation #5 of the Study into the Provision of Secondary Education, the Catholic education system determined to investigate alternate school settings. In essence, it is responding, in principle, to the need for flexible learning pathways within the context of the diocesan system of schools. Historically, schools within the system have been mainstream settings. The challenge, now, is to respond to **adjacent** and **complementary** models.

The adjacent system engages learners in tailored learning approaches outside mainstream schooling.

This is provided by a Flexible Learning Centre. It is the intention of the response to the Study to implement an initial Flexible Learning Centre in 2018, ideally within the Newcastle or Maitland metropolitan area. The potential, then, exists to develop other Centres in locations such as Taree, Muswellbrook, Raymond Terrace and West Lake Macquarie. These areas are in response to the need factors identified that include low SES, rural and indigenous. The students attending such environments, by and large, would not currently be attending Catholic schools.

The complementary system engages learners in tailored learning approaches outside mainstream schooling and transitions from there (back) into mainstream schooling.

It is the proposal of the Study's response to undertake now a parallel investigation into the establishment of a complementary structure. This model would be, largely, for students within the Catholic secondary sector, and potentially students in other mainstream sectors. Ideally the model would commence in 2018, at the latest in 2019.



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