Geographical dimensions of social inclusion and VET in Australia: an overview

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NATIONAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESEARCH PROGRAM

OCCASIONAL PAPER

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About the research

Geographical dimensions of social inclusion and VET: an overview

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This paper provides an overview and context for the program of research being undertaken by Monash and Deakin Universities, 'Geographical dimensions of social inclusion and VET in Australia'. The overarching purpose of the research is to provide an understanding of the role that education and training can play in reducing the risk of social exclusion and in improving labour force participation.

The projects that constitute the program of research all address aspects of disadvantage faced by groups in different locations. The three projects are:

- *Willingness-to-move: the influence of job conditions on geographic mobility* — this project examines the link between geographic mobility and the type of work available in areas with apparent excess labour demand. The project is investigating the value that individuals place on various characteristics, such as wages, in their 'willingness to move' decision.

- *Migrant women in regional Australia: the role of education and training in improving social inclusion* — this project explores the underutilisation of the skills of migrant women in regional areas and the possible role of education and training in removing barriers, if any, to their participation in the labour force and in other social activities.

- *Neighbourhood factors in the decision to participate in post-school education and training and the labour market* — this project compares the outcomes of education and training in areas of low and high social disadvantage, taking into account differences between the regions in their access to high-quality education and training and other community infrastructure.

This paper considers the socioeconomic and policy context for the research. The various frameworks for conceptualising disadvantage — social capital, the capability approach and social inclusion — are also discussed to enhance understanding of the issues being investigated.

The three research projects span the years 2011 to 2013, with all the reports arising from the research becoming available from NCVER from early 2014.

Tom Karmel
Managing Director, NCVER

Contents

Introduction

This paper introduces a three-year program of work: 'Geographical dimensions of social inclusion and VET in Australia'.[1] The aim of the program is to provide an understanding of the geographical aspects of social exclusion and the role that education and training can have in reducing its risk and in improving labour force participation in Australia.

The multi-dimensionality of social exclusion means that a single strategy for dealing with the issue is unlikely to succeed. At the same time, a focus on equity groups as if they are separate and distinct, and uniformly distributed across neighbourhoods and regions, would not reveal the overlapping experiences of disadvantage. It is thus important to examine the problem from various perspectives and to use a number of different research methods in the investigation.

The program has identified three projects relating to this topic of research and has brought together an interdisciplinary team of researchers to conduct the investigation. The projects will consider the variation in the dispositions and capabilities of individuals and groups that influence their capacity to make transitions through learning, training and work across diverse locations. The research will also examine how regional community factors and social capital affect these transitions. The three research projects are: 'Willingness-to-move: the influence of job conditions on geographic mobility'; 'Migrant women in regional Australia: the role of education and training in improving social inclusion'; and 'Neighbourhood factors in the decision to participate in post-school education and training and the labour market'.

Willingness-to-move: the influence of job conditions on geographic mobility

The imbalance in the supply of people with skills across geographical areas is of concern for governments and firms. Geographic labour mobility is important for ensuring that people respond to structural changes by moving from areas of high unemployment to those of low unemployment. This project is examining the link between geographic mobility and the type of work available in areas with apparent excess labour demand. The project is using the novel approach of 'choice modelling' to investigate the value that individuals place on the characteristics of job offers, such as wages and fly-in, fly-out contracts, in their 'willingness to move' decision.

Migrant women in regional Australia: the role of education and training in improving social inclusion

Migration is an important source of population growth and labour supply in regional Australia.[2] Migrants, permanent and temporary, often come with spouses and partners. For those who are sponsored by an employer, the offer of work does not extend to dependent migrants, who are frequently women. In regional areas, where labour markets are thin, this can lead to underutilisation of skills. This project is exploring the underutilisation of the skills of migrant women in regional areas

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[1] The authors would like to acknowledge the valuable input to this paper provided by Gerald Burke.
[2] The meaning and definition of 'region' in Australia is fluid and contentious. Sometimes the definition is policy-specific, for instance, Perth is considered a regional location for the purposes of the state and regional specific migration scheme. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) delineates geographical areas into five broad groups according to ease of access to services and social connection (Galligan et al. 2011).

and the possible role of education and training in removing the barriers, if any, to their participation in the labour force and in other social activities.

Neighbourhood factors in the decision to participate in post-school education and training and the labour market

While much research has been conducted on the influence of individual and family characteristics on social exclusion, very little has examined the role of community and neighbourhood factors, such as the proportion of the neighbourhood population in skilled occupations and the neighbourhood crime rate, in influencing social exclusion. This project is examining the differences in education and training outcomes in areas of social advantage by comparison with areas of social disadvantage, taking the contribution of these neighbourhood factors into account. The qualitative aspect of this project will explore the influence on education and training outcomes of differences in access to high-quality education and training and other community infrastructure between regions of high social disadvantage and those of low social disadvantage. The role social capital plays will also be examined, with an investigation of different forms of social capital: social capital defined as processes operating at the level of individuals; and social capital defined as a structural property of large aggregates such as neighbourhood areas.

This overview

The paper is organised in five sections. It begins by providing the socioeconomic and policy context for the research program. The following three sections provide brief discussions of the various ways of conceptualising disadvantage, the geographic aspects of social exclusion in Australia and the contribution of person- versus place-based polices in addressing disadvantage. The purpose of these three sections is to present the theoretical and conceptual context in which the research has been developed and to which it will contribute. Finally, details of the three projects constituting the complete research program will be given. The paper concludes with a brief note on the potential outcomes of the program.

Context

Irrespective of where they live, Australians generally enjoy a high standard of living relative to global standards. On most indicators of economic and social wellbeing, Australia has been doing well, on average, especially over the last couple of decades. To a large extent this is because the country is endowed with vast natural and agricultural resources, which the rest of the world desires and for which other countries are often prepared to pay high prices.

Most people have access to good education, a high standard of health care and the supply and distribution of basic utilities and services, such as water, energy, waste disposal and telecommunications. The safeguards on wages and conditions of employment, including compulsory superannuation, mean that many people are able to own their own homes and have a reasonable retirement income (Australian Government 2010b). The rollout of the National Broadband Network over the next decade will provide the vast majority of the population with access to a high-speed internet connection.

The Australian economy has been experiencing a resources (minerals, coal and gas) boom for at least a decade now — although some might say it has been 'suffering' from the resources boom. While the economies and labour markets of the mining states of Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory are expanding rapidly as a result of the resources boom, the traditional manufacturing states of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia are doing relatively poorly, but not as badly as some other parts of the developed world. This patchwork economic progress is often referred to as the 'two speed' economy in the media and it has become a topic of hot debate more recently because the disparities seem to have increased to well above historic levels. While the average unemployment rate in Australia in the first quarter of 2012 was 5.6%, in some parts of the country it was well above this level. For instance, in West Moreton in Queensland it was 10.9% and in Mersey-Lyell in Tasmania it was 9.8% (Australian Government 2012a). Youth unemployment is likely to be much higher in these regions: in March 2012, the national youth unemployment rate[3] was 24.5% (ABS 2012a). Such regional disparities in output, employment growth and unemployment rates are not unique to Australia; they exist in many Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD) countries, with skills shortages in some regions coexisting with high unemployment in other regions (OECD 2005).

Garton (2008), while acknowledging that the recent divergence in output and employment growth between the mining and non-mining states has been larger than average, contends that the mining states have generally grown faster than the rest for some time, but mainly because of a higher growth in population. However, the gap has increased substantially since he wrote the paper. In 2011, trend-adjusted state final demand[4] in Western Australia grew by 12.9%, in Queensland by 10.7% and in the Northern Territory by 4.9%. By comparison, the growth in the non-mining states ranged from 1.8% in New South Wales to negative 0.3% in South Australia (ABS 2012b).

Unlike previous booms, the current one is accompanied by high levels of both resource investment as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) and terms of trade (ratio of export prices to import

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[3] Persons aged 15—19 years looking for full-time work as a proportion of the full-time youth labour force.

[4] Final demand is a measure of economic demand for products in the economy. It is an aggregate obtained by summing government final consumption expenditure, household final consumption expenditure, private gross fixed capital formation and the gross fixed capital formation of public corporations and general government. It excludes international and interstate trade as well as change in inventories.

prices) (Gregory & Sheehan 2011).[5] The high levels of terms of trade have pushed the Australian dollar to record highs against all major currencies. This has adversely affected the trade-exposed non-resource sectors of the Australian economy. As a result there has been strong employment growth in some regions and stagnation or rising unemployment or underemployment (relative to the pre-Global Financial Crisis) in others.[6] The vacancies data show that, while many regions in Australia are experiencing a decline in advertised job vacancies, some regions in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory are experiencing vacancy growth rates of as much as 40% (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2011).

While the current public debate is mainly about the resources boom — which inevitably will end — and its differential impact across states and territories, other longer-term trends, such as demographic changes, economic restructuring and globalisation, are also having differential impacts (both positive and negative). Paid employment has shifted from men to women workers, from unskilled to skilled workers and from permanent full-time to part-time and casual employment.

Despite consistent improvement in the economic and social wellbeing of the average Australian, many disparities exist, with some groups marginalised and unable to share in the prosperity. Many such groups reside in regional Australia, that is, outside the main capital cities. The current Australian government recognises this problem and it acknowledges that too many Australians are still missing out on the opportunities they need to create meaningful and worthwhile lives (Australian Government 2009). The government notes that some people are at greater risk of attracting multiple disadvantages in particular neighbourhoods and communities. The costs of social exclusion are not only high to the individual but are high to communities and the nation. Since 2007 the Australian Government has had an explicit social inclusion policy to:

- improve the quality of essential government services, particularly in areas such as education and training, employment, health and housing

- ensure that those services work more effectively in the most disadvantaged communities

- develop partnerships between governments, businesses, not-for-profit organisations and the community and engage disadvantaged communities to help find solutions to address their particular needs (Hayes, Gray & Edwards 2008; Australian Government 2011).

While there may be differences in emphasis and nuance across the political divide in how to address the social exclusion problem, there is a common belief that the main way to reduce disparities and improve social inclusion is to improve labour force participation. Gaining a job increases income and reduces welfare dependence and is associated with better health and wellbeing. The current Australian government has a strong emphasis on using education and training to achieve this objective. The Australian Treasury has identified improving labour force participation as one of the 'three Ps' to meet the challenges of the ageing population (Australian Government 2010a). The other two Ps are productivity and population growth.

Clearly, the Australian Government has identified some policy problems in relation to labour force participation, particularly across regions, and the levels of skills and productivity of the population

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[5] In the past Australia has been considered to be experiencing a resource boom if either of these two variables has been at high levels.

[6] The short-term employment effect of the Global Financial Crisis was, however, much stronger on the mining sector than the rest of the economy, with employment declining by about 15% in the sector from November 2008 to May 2009 but increasing marginally in the rest of the economy, which was incidentally the target of the government's stimulus package (ABS 2011a).

more widely. The government also recognises the need to increase the social inclusion of marginalised groups and communities. While the policy solution proposed by the government has highlighted the role of education and training, the ways in which education and training can help alleviate these problems require further investigation and research. This is the context in which this research program, 'Geographical dimensions of social inclusion and VET in Australia', has been developed.

Conceptualisation of disadvantage

All three research projects that constitute the program of research address aspects of disadvantage faced by groups in different locations. The three projects have been designed to provide a better understanding of the channels through which disadvantage is manifested and the possible role of education and training in mitigating it. The concept of disadvantage among individuals or communities is complex and has been conceptualised in different ways in the existing research literature (Price-Robertson 2011). This section, therefore, briefly discusses the different concepts that have informed previous research in this field. The literature has provided the three research projects with a number of theoretical foundations for some of the measures of disadvantage that may be used in the empirical work. Understanding the concepts will also assist in providing the context for interpreting the results of the research.

Frequently, income and employment have been used to define disadvantage. Individuals or communities were considered disadvantaged or poor if their income fell below the poverty line, which was generally calculated on the basis of the national median income. The unemployment rates across neighbourhoods were similarly used to identify disadvantaged communities.

While the advantage of this traditional economic approach is that good data on income and employment are readily available, the limitation is that the data do not capture the full experience of those identified as poor and the nature of the communities they live in. Disadvantage can be complex and have many dimensions, which simple measures such as income and unemployment cannot fully capture. This has led to new ways of conceptualising disadvantage.

Social capital

The 1990s saw rising interest among stakeholders in the concept of social capital (Portes 1998). The literature contains a variety of definitions of social capital because of the highly context-specific nature of the concept. One definition commonly cited is that proposed by Putnam (1995). According to Putnam, social capital involves the social networks, norms and mutual trust that facilitate bonding among similar people and bridging across diverse people, with cooperation and mutual benefit being the end result. Similar to physical capital and human capital, social capital also has value. A lack of social capital implicitly constitutes disadvantage.

Social capital can vary across many dimensions, but according to Putnam the most important distinction is between bridging (inclusive) and bonding (exclusive) social capital. Bonding social capital networks are inward-looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups (for example, ethnic associations or country clubs). On the other hand, bridging social capital networks are inclusive and cut across diverse social strata (for example, civic rights movements and youth service groups).

In his book, *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community*, Putnam demonstrates that in the United States social capital increased along a number of measures from 1900 to about the 1960s and then declined (Putnam 2000).[7] He argues that this is a matter of concern, as social capital has many features that help people translate aspirations into realities. One of these features is a civic

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[7] Using Putnam's approach, Leigh (2010) plots and describes the social trends in Australia from the 1960s to the current period. He finds that Australia has also experienced a general decline in social capital over the last few decades.

virtue, in that social capital helps to increase the flow of information, which, in turn improves education and economic production. In this regard, social capital is seen as a public good because, as well as producing benefits for the individuals involved in cooperative behaviour, it produces positive effects, or so-called externalities, for the wider community by promoting the norms and practices of reciprocity and good governance. However, Coleman (1988) has argued that the public good benefits of social capital are not assured because the beneficiaries of actions that produce social capital are largely not the people engaging in these actions (who are often unaware of their effects). Consequently, there can be an underproduction of these public goods as individuals seek to maximise their individual benefits, unaware of the effects of their actions on others.

Other writers have taken these arguments further and identified the negative external effects of 'bad' social capital, when group solidarity and cooperation lead to maximising the benefits and internal cohesion of insiders at the expense of outsiders, as opposed to the 'good' social capital associated with high-trust societies, such as Japan, Germany and the United States (Fukuyama 1995). Bourdieu's (1986) use of the concept of social capital is another development of this argument. Bourdieu locates the discussion of social capital within a neo-Marxist analysis of social class, social reproduction and resistance. For Bourdieu, social capital is the sum of the resources that people draw on, simultaneously consciously and unconsciously, as a consequence of their social and familial networks and the habits acquired through their economic and cultural positions within a social space. This embodied habituation and thoughtless practice, or what Bourdieu calls 'habitus', generates struggles among individuals and groups for distinction and the control of access to goods, lifestyles, education, jobs, power or other scarce and desirable resources. In other words, for Bourdieu, social capital is embedded in practices that reproduce the social structure and confirm existing social exclusions and inequalities.

What conclusions can we draw from these differing accounts of social capital and how have they influenced research on social inclusion? In many respects, social capital is simply a recent, popularised term for the social processes and effects of sociability and social ties that have been studied by sociologists since the development of the discipline (Portes 1998). In its current formulation, however, social capital has brought sociologists and economists together. Specifically, it has been valuable in showing, at the individual level, how social ties are a form of social control of errant behaviour and a generator of the norms associated with success, especially in relation to education (see Coleman 1988). The concept has been used also to show how social ties contribute to social reproduction by creating privileged access to resources such as education, credentials, labour markets, and so on (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990). In different ways the works of Coleman and Bourdieu have stimulated considerable debate about and research into how people gain access to valued resources, such as educational credentials, and secure benefits, such as jobs in the more privileged parts of the economy (Baron, Field & Schuller [eds] 2001). Policy-makers too have seen the attraction of focusing on social capital to create non-economic and less costly solutions to social problems and ongoing structural disadvantage. This policy interest, in part aided by the activities of transnational bodies such as the World Bank, has generated an extensive program of research into and debate about the indicators and measures of social capital (Fine & Green 2001).

In Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has developed a broad conceptual framework for capturing statistics on social capital, including a set of possible indicators for measuring aspects of it (ABS 2004, 2006). Indicators include residential mobility; cultural diversity; trust (feelings of safety); reciprocity (access to and provision of support); reciprocity (giving); cooperation (conservation

practices); social participation (social activities and attendance at cultural venues);[8] sport and physical recreation; community support (voluntary work and caring); economic participation; and network structure (frequency, intensity and mode of contact). These indicators provide a valuable resource for investigating the role of social capital and social inclusion in Australia.

The capability approach

The capability approach is a theoretical framework encompassing wellbeing, development and justice. Although its origins go as far back as Aristotle, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx (see Nussbaum 1992; Sen 1999), the modern version has been pioneered by Amartya Sen, in the context of welfare economics, and developed significantly further by Martha Nussbaum and others. This approach to human wellbeing emphasises the importance of freedom of choice, individual heterogeneity and the multi-dimensional nature of welfare. The approach has applications in development economics, philosophy and public policy. It has been the inspiration behind the creation of the United Nations Human Development Index.

At its basic core the capability approach focuses on what people are effectively able to do, and to be; in other words, what they are capable of. It is concerned with individuals' ability to take part in actions and activities with value and meaning to them. In contrast, other approaches tend to concentrate on utilitarian values (happiness, desire, income, expenditure, consumption or basic needs). Sen initially used the following five components to assess capability:

- the importance of real freedoms in the assessment of a person's advantage

- individual differences in the ability to transform resources into valuable activities

- the multivariate nature of activities giving rise to happiness

- a balance of materialistic and non-materialistic factors in evaluating human welfare

- concern for the distribution of opportunities within society.

Nussbaum (1999) provides a list of basic capabilities relevant to all people and which, she argues, every responsible government should provide. These include life, health, the freedom to move, the ability to affiliate and engage in various forms of social interactions, and the ability to participate effectively in the political choices that govern one's life. Under this approach restricting or denying people their basic capabilities constitutes disadvantage.

The capabilities approach is a powerful antidote to policies that insist disadvantage should be tackled solely by increasing people's skills through formal qualifications; instead the focus should be on the broader role of education in enabling people to make choices. This is in contrast to valuing learners' participation in education and training solely for its impact on their human capital, on their employment and employability, and on productivity.

Compared with the social capital approach, the capabilities approach provides a normative framework for researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, enabling them to evaluate and identify individuals' wellbeing and the contexts in which they function and live their lives. Put more simply, the framework enables the mapping of the constraints people experience at the individual level, such as poverty and inequality, and the broader context through which these constraints are mediated by social, educational and welfare policies and institutional practices. However, some argue that the

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[8] Participation in education and training is included as part of social participation.

approach may be somewhat limited for understanding and specifying the social arrangements and institutional practices that might restrict people's opportunities (Leßmann 2009; Robeyns 2006).

A number of writers have recently explored the capabilities framework in relation to education and the potential to create individual capabilities for people to live a good life (Bridges 2006; Robeyns 2006; Walker 2008; Watts 2009; Webb et al. 2010). Drawing on Sen's idea that education enables critical reflection about the self and other people's lives, these writers use a capabilities approach that is premised on a theory of change. Yet such work is open-ended about what these changes might entail and how education may be used to develop the freedom to live a good life.

In contrast, in the social capital framework both the means (education and training) and the ends (particular forms of employment) are hierarchically organised and valued. For example, Watts (2009) draws on the capabilities approach to argue that the rejection of university education by young working-class men who are pursuing vocational qualifications for a trade should be understood as an adaptive preference; that is, choosing a more valued alternative career. For Watts (2009), the young men's choice is positive rather than negative; it is not the result of a capability deprivation or a rationalisation of a failed transition because they lack the social and cultural capital to gain entry to a university. Clearly, the capabilities approach can offer an understanding of individual decision-making.

Social inclusion

Since the mid-1990s the concept of social inclusion has been used increasingly to provide a framework for understanding disadvantage. Its attraction to policy-makers stems from the fact that it is inclusive of all groups in society and not just people who are disadvantaged. It also provides a more comprehensive understanding of disadvantage. The Australian Government appointed a Minister for Social Inclusion in 2007 and has a social inclusion unit located in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Similarly, social inclusion is high on the European Union's social policy agenda.

Social inclusion is generally defined as the antithesis of social exclusion. After reviewing various definitions suggested in the United Kingdom, Canada, the European Union, New Zealand, the United States and Australia, Vinson (2009) found the definition suggested by Pierson (2001) to be the most appealing in terms of its flexibility and the practical guidance it offered for identifying the construct. Pierson (2001) defined social exclusion as:

> A process that deprives individuals and families, groups and neighbourhoods of the resources required for participation in the social, economic and political activity of society as a whole. This process is primarily a consequence of poverty and low income, but other factors such as discrimination, low educational attainment and depleted living environments also underpin it. Through this process people are cut off for a significant period in their lives from institutions and services, social networks and developmental opportunities that the great majority of a society enjoys.

According to Pierson (2001) the five key and basic processes that drive social exclusion are:

- poverty and low income
- lack of access to the job market
- limited social supports and networks
- the effect of the local neighbourhood
- exclusion from services.

As with social capital, social inclusion is also considered to have a multi-dimensional aspect. Furthermore, the positive social connections flowing from social inclusion contribute to overall wellbeing, while the absence of such relationships contributes to disadvantage. The social inclusion model tends to be broader and places stronger emphasis on the individual characteristics of people who live in the neighbourhood compared with the social capital model, which emphasises 'place effects' and social norms (Price-Robertson 2011).

In spite of the multi-dimensional nature of the social exclusion problem, political solutions in the UK and Australia have focused on reforms that eased people out of social welfare and into the labour market through skills development (Armstrong 2006). In the case of Australia's Indigenous population, policy has also included other aspects of social exclusion such health, housing and substance abuse.

In summary, as the above discussion indicates, disadvantage can be conceptualised in a variety of ways. While our program of research is framed around the concept of social inclusion, we will draw on the other frameworks where they enhance our understanding of the issues being investigated.

Geographical aspects of social exclusion in Australia

The national averages, while important, are insufficient for revealing the full story of how the population is faring. At a time when the average real income of Australians is increasing, there is growing inequality. In the decade to 2008, GDP, an indicator of economic prosperity, increased from $41 000 to $51 000 per person; however, in the same period the degree of inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, increased from 0.303 to 0.331 (Australian Government 2010b). Income is just one measure, albeit an important one, of inequality. People who experience disadvantage are often faced by multiple disadvantages. A review of the literature shows that social exclusion in Australia also has a geographical dimension. This section provides a brief review of this literature.

The most disadvantaged population group in Australia are Indigenous people. They face multiple disadvantages, which include low socioeconomic status, poor health, low education outcomes and low labour force participation. The gap in all aspects of wellbeing between the Indigenous population and the rest is resistant to attempts to reduce it and in many respects it is widening. Other groups who also face considerable disadvantage are people with disabilities; the homeless; the long-term unemployed; children in jobless households; and recent arrivals to Australia. In the last group it is migrants who arrive on humanitarian grounds who face most disadvantage, although some skilled migrants, particularly their accompanying spouses, are also at risk of social exclusion.

A growing number of studies are demonstrating evidence of the spatial concentration of disadvantage in Australia (Gregory & Hunter 1995; Australian Urban and Regional Development Review 1995; Fincher & Wulff 1998; O'Conner, Stimson & Taylor 1998; Stimson 2001; Vinson 2007; Baum 2008). These researchers show that the impacts of the long-term trends vary not only along the traditional city/country boundaries, but also across neighbourhoods within and outside cities.

Gregory and Hunter (1995) highlight that the economic distance between Australians from different parts of the city widened to an extraordinary degree from 1976 to 1991. The fact that most people are unaware of these changes, they write, is due to the heavy conditioning of an individual's view of the world exerted by their family, friends and the street they live in; consequently, as inequality grows across neighbourhoods, it may not be recognised by all Australians.

Gregory and Hunter's investigation compared neighbourhoods within urban boundaries, but similar patterns of inequality exist across neighbourhoods in regional areas (Stimson 2001). The forces driving these changes have not abated, so it is likely, therefore, that the trends observed in these studies are continuing.

More recently Vinson (2007) investigated the spatial distribution of disadvantage using a range of survey, census and administrative data. On the basis of five indicators of social disadvantage — social distress, health, community safety, economics and education — he identified the postcodes with the highest level of disadvantage in Australia. He found disadvantage to be concentrated in a small number of areas, with 1.7% of postcodes and communities accounting for over seven times their share of the main factors that entrench disadvantage. He also found evidence that, without sustained policy interventions, disadvantage can remain entrenched over long periods in some communities.

Using a different method and the 2006 census data, Baum (2008) comes to a similar conclusion as Vinson; namely, that place-based disadvantage continues to be a feature of Australian cities.

There are at least two reasons, according to Gregory and Hunter, why we, and especially policy-makers, should be interested in and concerned about these developments. First, if we still subscribe to an egalitarian Australia, where there is, all things being equal, less dispersion in terms of socioeconomic status, income distribution and economic opportunities among its population, then it is important to understand the process driving these developments. Second, if economic inequality is being concentrated in particular neighbourhoods, then these neighbourhoods may be developing their own 'pathologies', which means that the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage is confirmed and the economic divide widened.

Understanding the process through which disadvantage is manifested helps to identify its concentration and assists in developing policies designed to mitigate its effects.

Place- or person-based policies

Government policies have traditionally targeted a specific aspect of disadvantage, independent of other aspects, at the state or national level, and the policies are demarcated according to portfolio responsibilities. Universal support is then provided to those who experience the particular disadvantage. These types of policies may not be the most appropriate approach for addressing the multiple disadvantages that some people experience or for those instances when disadvantage is more concentrated in some neighbourhoods than in others. In these circumstances a place-based approach may be more appropriate. In understanding the geographical dimensions of social exclusion and the role education and training may play in this, it is important to be cognisant of the different types of policies that have been established to address these issues and the impact they are having.

In the past Australia has not placed a high priority on policies specifically designed to reduce place-based inequality and, hence, its experience in policy effectiveness in this regard is more recent and limited, unlike, for example, that of the United States (Gregory & Hunter 1995). With increasing evidence and concern about the spatial concentration of disadvantage, place-based policy responses have, however, emerged across different levels of government (Byron 2010). The Australian Government's *Communities for children* (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2005) and *Building Australia's future workforce — targeted locations income management* (Australian Government 2012b) and the Victorian Government initiative, *Neighbourhood renewal* (2007)) are three examples of place-based initiatives in Australia.

There is continuing debate about the relative merits of place-based versus the mainstream people-based policies (Winnick 1966; Griggs et al. 2008; Baum 2008; Byron 2010). The reality is that there is a synergy between the two types of policies. As Griggs et al. (2008) note, people live in places, contribute to places and are affected by places. These authors graphically presented the overlap between the two types of policies in terms of their focus; this is shown in figure 1. In this figure, Type 1 policies are those with a major focus on place (for example, local infrastructure) and pay comparatively little regard to the impact on the population living in the place. Type 2 policies also improve local infrastructure but the intended purpose is explicitly to enhance the lives of both current and future residents (for example, provision of early childhood education and care). Type 3 policies focus on persons, but the intended impact is to improve the neighbourhood (for example, measures to improve anti-social behaviour). Type 4 policies are aimed exclusively at improving individual welfare without regard to local circumstances or consequences (for example, income support for families with children or education and training). Finally, Type 5 policies aim to simultaneously improve place and residents (for example, community-based policies). An example of a Type 5 policy comes from the UK. It is the *New deal for communities* (NDC) (Batty et al. 2010), whereby five elements of disadvantage — joblessness, high levels of crime, educational underachievement, poor health and problems with housing and the physical environment — are tackled. Specific 'targets' are set locally, according to the specific needs of each community, with the ultimate aim being to 'close the gap' between the targeted community and other neighbourhood renewal areas.

Figure 1   Policy objectives and targeting relating to person and place

Intended impact on:

	Place	Person
Place	1	2
	5 Place and person	
Person	3	4

Major focus on:
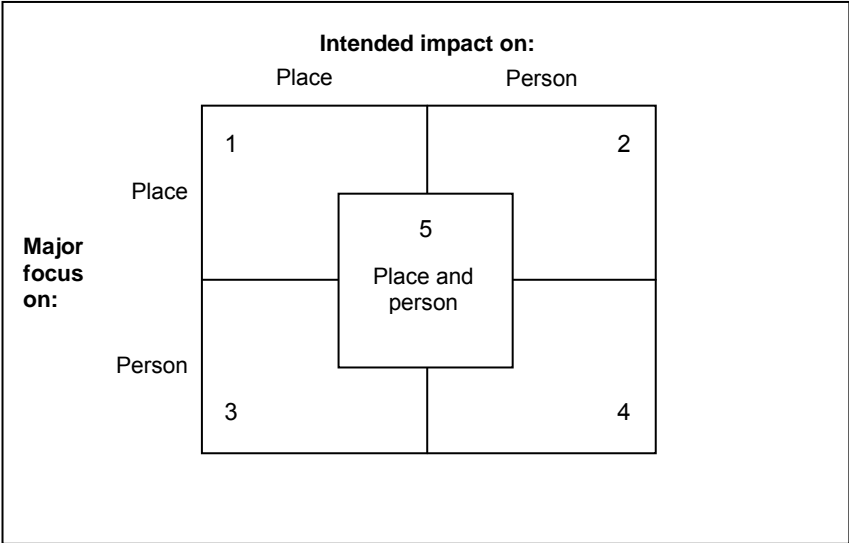
Source: Based on Griggs et al. (2008).

The separation of policies by person or place does not reflect the reality in which disadvantage is mediated. People are affected by the place they live in and places are affected by the people who live there. There is an increasing recognition, supported by evidence, that a holistic or mixed approach, which takes account of the particular circumstances of the people and place, is preferable to one that is based merely on tradition or past practice (Baum et al. 1999; Randolph 2004; Griggs et al. 2008; Baum 2008).

One of the strongest justifications for place-based approaches is that they enable people experiencing multiple disadvantages to be targeted and an integrated service delivery platform to be provided. They are, however, not viewed as a substitute for the traditional people-based approaches but as complementary to them, for use when the complex nature of disadvantage may limit people's ability to benefit from a series of people-based approaches designed to target particular aspects of disadvantage independently of each other. The overall success of place-based programs very much depends on how well they are integrated in a mutually reinforcing way with the traditional people-based approaches (Byron 2010).

Research projects

As already flagged, this program of research consists of three projects. While they are stand-alone pieces of work, they are linked to the overall theme of the program, which is to improve our understanding of the geographical dimensions of social exclusion and the role of education and training in addressing social exclusion. This section provides more details about each of these projects.

Willingness-to-move: the influence of job conditions on geographic mobility

Labour mobility, including geographic mobility, is a feature of a dynamic economy. It is an indication of the economy adjusting to optimise the allocation of labour to jobs and to economic shocks. Labour mobility has traditionally been recognised as an important determinant of full employment. Lux and Sunega (2011), for instance, suggest that the current sustained level of high unemployment in the US is partly due to labour immobility, which in turn has been affected by negative equity in housing loans. Earlier work on housing tenure in the UK shows similar results (Battu, Ma & Phimister 2008; Henley 1998).

Labour mobility, however, involves costs and benefits to the individual, the firm and to the wider economy. In particular, geographic mobility allows the individual to transcend 'location disadvantages' such as unemployment, poor opportunities and quality of life (Ryan & Whelan 2010). For others, such as the young, job mobility can help career development and increase earnings and earnings growth (Topel & Ward 1992). At the economy level, labour mobility helps to reduce the imbalance between supply and demand for skills, especially when it exists across sectors or regions. In other words, it allows the movement of resources from areas of poor marginal productivity to areas of high marginal productivity. Excessive levels of labour mobility, on the other hand, have the potential to inhibit social cohesion and the building of community capacity.

Active labour market policies designed to increase the demand for labour in regions where unemployment is high are alternatives to policies that encourage people to move location. Such policies, which are often part of the social inclusion agenda, are adopted by governments to reduce regional imbalance in employment opportunities (OECD 2005). However well-intentioned the policies are, they have the potential to perpetuate locational disadvantage by encouraging people with disadvantage to remain in deprived areas. Geographical mobility, on the other hand, has the potential to move people away from areas characterised by poor socioeconomic outcomes and thus avoid the consequences of residing in areas of entrenched deprivation.

The coexistence of high demand for labour in regional areas (parts of Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory) and pockets of high unemployment in other parts of the country, but particularly in metropolitan areas, poses a policy dilemma for Australia. If the mining sector is expanding and largely profitable, then there should be a continued increase in wages to attract

labour.[9] However, persistent high unemployment in some regions and a shortage of labour in others suggest two possibilities:

- Employers are unwilling to hire because the applicants lack the appropriate skills and experience.

- Individuals with the necessary skills are unwilling to move to where the jobs are, or do not have information about the opportunities.

This study focuses on the second point. The types of incentives offered to encourage people to move to locations where there are severe skill shortages are an important policy issue for governments as well as for firms. Individuals with the appropriate skills may choose not to move for a range of reasons, including differences in the standards of living and the difficulties associated with moving the family. This study proposes to:

- identify the various factors influencing the willingness to move

- measure the minimum increase in wages required to convince an individual to make the decision to move.

Previous studies have examined the issue of willingness to move by asking individuals whether or not they would consider moving to another region to improve their economic wellbeing. These studies, which have identified a number of influential variables, including age, marital status and education, in this decision (Fidrmuc & Huber 2007; Anh, de la Rica & Ugidos 1999) are limited in the sense that they do not suggest effective policy levers for governments or firms to encourage worker mobility.

This study uses a 'choice experiment' (see, for example, Hanneman 1999) on a sample of 3000 people aged 18 years or older in South Australia and New South Wales. The sample will exclude full-time students and those who are not in the labour force. In a 'choice' experiment, individuals are asked to respond to a range of hypothetical scenarios of job offers. In each scenario, two job offers with different characteristics are made and the respondent has to make a choice to accept either one of the two job offers or reject both. The job offers will vary with the background of the respondent. An analysis of the responses will allow us to estimate such things as the minimum increase in wages required to move an individual from location X to location Y. The attractiveness of the choice modelling approach is that it allows us more precise control over the hypothetical situations in terms of wages and other job characteristics, such as such as fly-in, fly-out arrangements, training requirements and the length of a contract.

As at June 2012 the online choice experiment is underway. In the later part of 2012 we will analyse the data and a final report will be available in 2013.

Migrant women in regional Australia: the role of education and training in improving social inclusion

Increased globalisation has witnessed the development of a globally mobile workforce of skilled migrants, including highly qualified knowledge workers from countries of the emerging regions, for instance, India, China and Southeast Asia, who emigrate seeking better career opportunities and living conditions in the developed countries. Australia is one of a number of countries that has capitalised

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[9] While there are reports of skilled workers being 'poached' from the construction sector in some parts of Western Australia and Queensland to work in mining, excess demand for labour seems to persist to the extent that some mining companies are considering bringing in workers from overseas on temporary visas.

on these movements of people, recruiting large numbers of skilled migrants to satisfy real or perceived skills shortages across industries and occupations.

While most migrants choose to settle in metropolitan areas, in the years 2001 to 2006, about 140 000 settled in areas outside the capital cities (Hugo & Harris 2011). Many regional organisations, such as area health services, are reliant on overseas-trained professionals to provide basic services to the communities they serve.

Recent migrants generally have higher rates of unemployment (ABS 2011b). They are also often under- or inappropriately employed, highlighting the challenges migrants face in finding employment that utilises their skills and qualifications (see, for example, Ho 2006). This represents a productivity loss for the communities in which migrants settle and contributes to social exclusion.

In those regional areas where labour markets are thin, finding employment is likely to be particularly challenging for migrants who have not entered Australia through an employer-sponsored program. Often the principal visa applicant for the skilled migration program has been a male, and if sponsored by an employer, already has a job to go to. But the literature on migratory flows tells a story of male migration: 'women (dis)appear' or they are relegated to the family reunion flow (Kofman 2000, 2004; Kofman et al. 2000; Kofman & Raghuram 2005, 2006; Yuval-Davis, Anthias & Kofman 2005; Warren, Webb & Strakova 2008). As a consequence, the aspirations, needs and outcomes for migrant women in regard to work and learning are under-recognised in the skilled migration policies in many countries (Curran et al. 2006; Devos 2011; McCall 2000). In addition, particular groups under the humanitarian programs have also been encouraged to settle in regional areas, with the research literature on these groups pointing to a severe loss in continuity of employment and downward occupational mobility for those with professional skills and qualifications as a consequence of forced migration (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2006; Smyth & Kum 2010).

Recent Australian research has explored a number of issues relevant to skilled women migrants in regional areas. This includes regional women's education and training needs (Butler & Ferrier 2006a, 2006b), participation in vocational education and training (VET) by region (Walstab & Lamb 2008), regional enterprise development and the role of VET (Garlick, Taylor & Plummer 2007) and matching VET provision to regional development skills needs (Kearns, Bowman & Garlick 2008; Gelade & Fox 2008). Yet, the global movement of skilled migrants is creating new communities that challenge existing models of education and training and draw attention to new forms of exclusion. Gaps in provision suggest the need to think anew about the role of VET in promoting social inclusion in the communities in which migrants seek to settle. This study is designed to address these issues and inform policy development on the role of VET in supporting social inclusion in regional areas by focusing on the following two questions:

- How can VET contribute towards socially inclusive outcomes for migrant women and their families in regional Australia?

- How can the cultural capital and assets of migrant women be harnessed in the context of regional industry, community development and social cohesion?

The project takes a case study approach to investigate these two questions in the Greater Shepparton region in Victoria. Through this investigation the project aims to provide new ideas about the role of VET in promoting social inclusion for migrants, particularly if they settle in regional areas.

The study is informed by a migration systems approach, which regards migration as a dynamic process involving linkages between movements of people, organisations and networks across both sending and

receiving countries. The entry point into this process is data about the journey women migrants take to arrive at where they are now. Individual biographies will be collected to elicit information on these journeys and will include data on the migrants' identities and dispositions. The project will locate the woman migrant, her labour market experiences and her formal education and training in a wider context to understand how she has constructed her social and cultural identity and developed her dispositions. It will examine how these identities and dispositions are influenced by wider social networks. This approach enables the exploration of how the lives of the women migrants are bound up by the actions of national institutions, recruitment agencies, employers, educational institutions and the social networks in which the women are immersed through their families and communities.

To facilitate this design, the project will work on two fronts, preceded by consultations with local stakeholders to gain an informed perspective of the Greater Shepparton region. Consultations will also occur with the migrant communities and migrant support agencies within the region. The first front involves working with individual women migrants, and where relevant, their partners. It aims to build accounts of the actual experiences of the women in relation to their decision to migrate, the networks that facilitated their migration and the resources they were able to deploy for the move. These accounts will determine the conduct of the follow-up interviews with key organisations, which will be identified by the women as important in their migration and settlement.

The second front will comprise interviews with key stakeholders. The intention is to provide a perspective on the level and type of demand for work, education and training from migrant women in the region and the kind of support offered to them.

Once all data have been collected and analysed, an event will be held with interested parties to discuss the findings and to develop ways to support women migrants' aspirations, including education and training and participation in the labour force.

In summary, the project studies the interplay between state and regional migration policies, the regional labour market and support services for migrants, particularly education and training. It does this through the lens and voices of women migrants. The study will provide an understanding of how women migrants' skills are currently utilised and if they are not, then how a consideration of the factors that work against them might be useful. It is hoped the results will be used to inform policies on migrant settlement services.

Neighbourhood factors in the decision to participate in post-school education and training and the labour market

Neighbourhood effects matter when geographical location is significant, after personal and family characteristics have been controlled for. If these neighbourhood factors are barriers for young people to completing school and participating in post-school education and training, then there needs to be an appropriate policy response for overcoming them. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some types of neighbourhoods (for example, those with high rates of alcohol consumption and other drug use, high incidence of crime, etc.) have a strong influence on youth behaviour. This research project will investigate the existence and scale of neighbourhood effects on young Australians' decisions to participate in post-school education and training.

The existing literature on the impact of neighbourhood factors on youth outcomes originates in the US, although there are a few UK-based studies as well. Previous Australian work has examined the effect of neighbourhoods on their young people's decision to drop out of school (Overman 2002; Heath

1999). Overman (2002) shows that this decision is influenced by neighbourhood effects that operate at two different spatial scales. At the larger scale, he found neighbourhoods with a high proportion of people with vocational qualifications had higher dropout rates, which he argued reflected the structure of the local labour market and the social networks. At the smaller scale, the socioeconomic status of the immediate neighbourhood had a negative impact on dropout rates. Heath (1999) also found the likelihood of an individual leaving school early to be positively related to the neighbourhood unemployment rate.

Instead of looking at the impact on dropout rates, Jensen and Seltzer (2000) investigated the impact on young Australians' decisions to undertake further studies. The study was based on a small sample of Year 12 students from ten Melbourne high schools. The neighbourhood factors were derived from the 1991 census. After controlling for individual and family characteristics, the study found the desire to undertake further studies was inversely related to the neighbourhood unemployment rate.

Andrews et al. (2004) examined the impact of neighbourhood factors on the labour force outcomes of young Australians. The study, using data from the Australian Youth Survey (AYS) and the 1991 census, found that the neighbourhood socioeconomic status had a significant role in explaining the labour market outcomes.

At the same time as updating previous studies, the study proposed here will also investigate the role of other neighbourhood factors such as those identified in Vinson (2007) as sources of disadvantage. Depending on the availability of data, these could include the rate of substance abuse, incarceration rates and other indicators of disadvantage.

The project aims to answer the following questions:

- Do students from disadvantaged areas perform equally well, after controlling for personal and other socioeconomic factors, in education and training as their counterparts from advantaged areas?

- Which socioeconomic characteristics of the local area contribute most to inequality in students' education and training outcomes?

It uses data on individuals and their families from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY). Data on neighbourhood factors will be sourced from the 2006 census and other available administrative data.

Survey and administrative data can provide useful information to explain the neighbourhood factors affecting the education and training decisions of young people. However, not all the nuances in these decisions may be captured by the statistical analyses. In the second part of this study it is proposed to conduct case studies to fill in some of the gaps in knowledge about the association between different types of neighbourhood social capital and young people's decisions on education and training. The focus will be on neighbourhoods in regional Australia.

The study will use qualitative research methods to make in-depth comparisons of the role of VET in regional Australia between areas of social advantage and those of social disadvantage. It will: investigate such issues as the access to affordable providers of education and training; identify the different forms and role of social capital; examine the effect of the types of industry and business in the neighbourhood; and consider employers' attitudes towards education and training and recruitment and selection. It will adopt an inclusive approach to examining the social processes shaping VET and participation in the labour market, ranging from consideration of those factors that promote (or act as bridges) to those that inhibit (or act as barriers) participation among young people.

Potential outcomes of this research

The results from this program of research will provide the Australian community with an understanding of the geographical aspects of social inclusion. It will provide an analysis of the contribution that education and training can make to improving social inclusion and labour force participation. It will identify aspects of education and training access and delivery that may be barriers to social inclusion and explore ways to overcome these. The research will contribute to the debate on the theoretical framework for understanding disadvantage, which is important for developing policy in this field. Methodologically, the research will shed light on the barriers, if any, of labour mobility from regions with relatively high unemployment to regions with excess labour demand using research methods that are new to VET.

All of the final reports on this research will be available through NCVER by early 2014. For further information on this program please contact:

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NVETRE program funding