

## Student centred learning and road safety in the later years

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The principles of road safety education have application well beyond the early years. Practical and 'on road' learning experiences delivered within an applied learning framework have a high level of relevancy in the later years. A new senior school certificate introduced in Victorian schools in 2003, the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), provides for student centred and discovery-based learning focusing on skills development for life, training and work. As a passage to adult independence, students can engage in a unit of work that provides them an opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of behaviours that affect road safety for young drivers. Achievement is demonstrated through students' self-management, decision-making and interpersonal skills; communication of their learning to others; and understanding of the responsibility they and others have to ensuring a safe use of the roads.

### BACKGROUND

The Victorian Government has set education and road safety targets. The education target relevant to this paper is: 'by 2010 increase the number of young people who successfully complete Year 12 or equivalent to 90%' (*Department of Education & Training website 2005*). At the outset of this target in 2000/01, around 72% of young people aged 19 years achieved Year 12 or its equivalent (Victorian Certificate of Education, Certificate II in vocational education and training or Certificate III in further education).

The road safety target relevant to this paper is 'to reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries on Victorian roads by 20% by the year 2007' (*arrive alive! Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 2002-2007*).

#### ***Education and training***

Compulsory education in Victoria is from as early as 4 years of age (Prep) until young people turn 16 years of age (usually in Year 10), although the Government is proposing to increase compulsory education until young people turn 17 years of age. Until 2001, post compulsory education in Victoria referred to education and training after Year 10 and included the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), vocational education training (VET) and further education (FE).

To inform the development of strategies and initiatives to enable the achievement of the relevant education target, the *Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria, 2000* (Kirby Review), was undertaken. A panel was established to review:

- 'the needs of young people entering, within and exiting from post compulsory education and training in Victoria; and
- the provision of educational programs and services for young people at the compulsory education level.'

The Kirby Review identified a range of issues facing young people and their education and training and employment pathways. Those issues included poor levels of participation in education and training; weak linkages between education, training, employment, industry and support networks; lack of coordination between the education and training systems; the lack of engagement of some young people in existing education and training; access and equity to education and training options to meet individual learning styles (e.g. applied learning), employment aspirations and socio and geographical factors; and relevance of teaching approaches.

However, the Kirby Review also acknowledged the commitment and innovation of some schools, training providers and support agencies in adapting their 'business model' to accommodate the needs of young people to ensure successful transition from education to training or employment. As a result of the recommendations of the Kirby Review, a number of initiatives have been implemented. The one with relevance to this paper is the development, trial and implementation of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).

The VCAL is a senior secondary school certificate that sits alongside the VCE and is designed for young people seeking pathways to training, further education and employment.

Existing good practice in schools that had partnered with training of providers, community organisations and employers or industry underpinned the development of the VCAL curriculum framework. Common themes emerged from good practice alternative programs, including teaching approaches based on youth development and adult learning principles, literacy and numeracy skills, a focus on vocational training and development of employability skills, and personal development skills.

Consequently, the VCAL qualification was developed at three levels (Foundation, Intermediate and Senior) to accommodate student learning needs and enable flexible entry and exit points and enable accreditation of the VCAL at a level that meets the young person's needs and abilities. The certificate is delivered by schools at Years 11 and 12 and by TAFE institutes and Adult Community Education providers (ACE) to young people aged 15 to 19 years. Each certificate requires the achievement of 10 credits (with specific requirements for successful completion at each level) across four curriculum strands as follows:

- Literacy and Numeracy Skills
- Industry Specific Skills
- Work Related Skills
- Personal Development Skills

Credits for each strand can be achieved by successful completion of accredited units of 100 nominal hours duration including new VCAL units in Literacy, Numeracy, Work Related and Personal Development Skills; VCE units; VET units/modules; and FE units/modules.

The VCAL Participation Project 2005 (Victorian Qualifications Authority, 2005), reports on the increase in VCAL enrolments from its trial year in 2002 from 546 students to in excess of 10,000 student enrolments in 2005. Had VCAL not been available, 31% of students enrolled in the qualification would not have attended school in 2005.

Traffic safety education has application within the VCAL framework, but particular application in the Personal Development Skills strand.

## **Road safety**

*arrive alive! Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 2002-2007* sets out the Government's target to reduce road trauma. Party to the Victorian road safety strategy are VicRoads, the Transport Accident Commission, Department of Justice and Victoria Police. In achieving the target, the strategy identifies young/novice driver safety and traffic safety education (as part of working with the community) as challenges.

The *Young Driver Safety and Graduated Licensing Discussion Paper* recently released by the Victorian Government (State of Victoria, 2005) presents safety issues for young drivers based on crash statistics and proposed measures to reduce young driver road crashes.

Research and crash statistics provide evidence that inexperience is the primary cause of young driver crashes and that alcohol, speed, fatigue, multiple passengers, night time driving and in-car distractions such as mobile phone use compounds this inexperience to increase the risk of crashing.

Traffic safety education (TSE) in Victoria is collaboratively delivered under the *TSE Action Plan Victoria 2002-2007* by the key traffic safety education stakeholders; VicRoads, Department of Education and Training, Transport Accident Commission, Department of Infrastructure and Metlink, Victoria Police and the RACV (see Adams et al, 2005).

The key deliverers of TSE are parents and carers supported by schools through programs and activities linked to the curriculum.

A new strategy has been developed that proposes targeting TSE at key windows of opportunity throughout children's and young people's education; pre-school, early primary school, transition from primary to secondary school and pre-licence education. These windows also reflect the heightened motivation for parents' involvement in their children's travel. Road safety in the later years focuses on the individual's responsibility for themselves and others as road users and young drivers.

The significant challenges identified in the Victoria's road safety strategy can be aligned with the *Safe System* approach, which acknowledges that crashes will happen, but serious injuries and fatalities can be reduced by building safer roads, enforcing safer speeds, driving safer cars and having safer road users. These issues have particular relevance for traffic safety education in the later years.

## DISCUSSION

The delivery of the VCAL curriculum is based on youth development and adult learning principles (VCAL Curriculum Planning Guides 2003, Victorian Qualifications Authority). These principles have a high level of relevance to the delivery of traffic safety education and include, but are not limited to:

- Negotiated curriculum content to build on student's interests, abilities and strengths
- A focus on applied learning opportunities
- Delivery strategies that encourage personal development and growth
- Delivery strategies that recognise different learning styles
- Curriculum that values and engages the contribution of young people
- Curriculum that builds competence and resilience in individuals including minimising risk factors and enhancing the promotion of protective behaviours of young people

- Delivery strategies that encourage civil and civic participation and promote active citizenship
- Partnership development that links young people with the broader community

The purpose of the VCAL Personal Development Skills Strand is to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes that lead toward:

- Social responsibility
- Building community
- Civic responsibility
- Improved self confidence and self esteem
- Valuing civic participation in a democratic society

The VCAL Personal Development Skills units aim to develop:

- Environmental awareness
- Commitment to, and achievement of, personal goals
- Civil and civic responsibility
- Improved health and fitness

Of most relevance to road safety are social and civic responsibility and the aims associated with personal goal setting and achievement and skills, behaviours and attitudes associated with civil and civic responsibility.

Within a VCAL Personal Development Skills Unit, there is opportunity to undertake a comprehensive unit of work of 100 hours duration (typically over a semester). The content of that unit is decided at the local level by the provider in accordance with youth development and adult learning principles required by the curriculum framework.

Many of the youth development and adult learning principles underpin the approaches for delivery of the VCAL units. For example, student centred teaching practices should be based on experiential learning activities such as role plays, peer group discussion, case studies, guest speakers and audio visual presentations and extension of learning beyond the classroom. The teaching approaches resonate with approaches to deliver health promotion education and messages with young people, particularly those associated with harm minimisation (VCAL Personal Development Skills Curriculum Guide, 2003, VQA).

Young people's understanding of driver issues and the risks which affect them, their ability to develop strategies to counter the risks and the development of skills to effectively communicate those issues and strategies provides for deep learning opportunities that have the potential to lead to safer road user behaviour in an increasingly complex traffic system. Recognition of this learning can be achieved through the VCAL.

## VCAL ROAD SAFETY UNIT DEVELOPMENT

Many VCAL providers (schools, TAFE and ACE) are developing units on road safety to meet the learning outcomes of the VCAL Personal Development Skills units. Road safety has a high level of relevance to young people in Victoria, given their motivation to obtain the Learner Permit from 16 years of age and Driver Licence from 18 years of age.

Given this demand and the synergy between the VCAL principles of learning and teaching and the effective communication of road safety issues to young drivers based on health promotion and harm minimisation approaches, VicRoads is currently undertaking the development of a set of VCAL Road Safety Units.

The resource will:

- explain the context for road safety and young/novice driver issues and how these relate to the *Safe System* approach which has been adopted by Victoria
- comprise at least 12 VCAL units that meet the learning outcomes for Personal Development Skills units, Literacy & Numeracy Skills units and integrated units at Foundation, Intermediate and Senior levels.
- The units will include one or more of the following road safety issues:
  - learner driver experience
  - safer road users
  - safer roads
  - safer cars
  - speed
  - risks – alcohol and drugs, multiple passengers, fatigue, peer pressure, distractions (mobile phones etc)
  - crash statistics

The resource will be available online and free of charge to all VCAL providers (schools, TAFE and ACE) in time for the 2006 school year.

The proposed benefits of the units include consistency in delivery of traffic safety education to young people. The units of work will address a range of road safety issues consistent with the *Safe System* approach and *TSE Action Plan*, and aims to assist in the preparation of young people to enter the system as responsible drivers.

### ***An example***

A VCAL Road Safety Unit currently being delivered involves students organising the VicRoads *Keys Please* session. *Keys Please* is a learner driver/supervising driver (parent/carer) information session that promotes the target of 120 hours driving practice and strategies to employ during the learner phase before sitting for a Driver's Licence. The ninety minute session is delivered state-wide through schools and community settings by trained facilitators.

In organising the *Keys Please* session, students undertake activities that allow them to demonstrate and achieve the following learning outcomes in a VCAL Intermediate Personal Development Skills unit:

- plan and organise a complex activity
- demonstrate self management skills for goal achievement (particularly if achieving a Learner Permit is integrated in this unit)
- demonstrate knowledge, skills and abilities in the context of an activity or project
- utilise interpersonal skills to communicate ideas and information

This Intermediate VCAL Personal Development Skills unit requires the achievement of the above learning outcomes through activities such as:

- researching issues associated with young driver safety
- organisation of all aspects of the *Keys Please* session – liaison with presenters and stakeholders; arranging equipment, catering, venue etc
- communication with everyone associated with the session
- marketing and advertising the session to the target audience (Year 10 students and their parents/carers)
- presenting key road safety issues to peers

Students are assessed using a range of methods including student meeting notes, teacher checklists, participation evaluation forms, visual record of the preparation and conduct of the session etc.

Anecdotally, greater levels of attendance by parents and students have been recorded at *Keys Please* sessions which have been organised by students.

## CONCLUSION

There is significant synergy in the best practice approaches to delivering health promotion messages and education, including road safety, to young people and the applied learning focus of the VCAL, which is based on youth development and adult learning principles.

Given the stage of youth development and exposure to traffic as a car passenger or learner/probationary driver of young people in Victoria aged 15 to 19 years, VCAL provides an exceptional opportunity to address a range of road safety issues within an applied learning framework.

The VCAL Road Safety Units currently under development will focus on a range of young/novice driver issues. The units will be designed to provide an opportunity for deep learning over an extended period with the aim of safer road user behaviour of young people in an increasingly complex traffic system.

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