Implementation and participation in vocational education and training in Catholic schools

Michelle Deanne Swan

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IMPLEMENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Submitted by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education.

Faculty of Education and Arts

2019
Key words

Vocational Education and Training
Vocational Education and Training in Schools
School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships
Higher School Certificate
Senior Secondary
School Transition
Subject Selection
Subject Implementation
VET
VETiS
Vocationalism
Catholic education
Statement of Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree of diploma. No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. All research procedures reported in this thesis received the approval of the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Professional editor, Anya Lloyd-Smith, provided copyediting and proofreading services, according to the guidelines laid out in the university-endorsed national ‘Guidelines for editing research theses’.

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Signature [redacted]

22 January 2019
Date
Abstract

Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) is recognised in all Australian states’ and territories’ education systems in the senior secondary certificates of education. The federal government has researched the benefits of VETiS and promoted it as a subject area of worth through both policy and funding. System leadership in schools have also included VETiS in their strategic direction by establishing and resourcing Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to manage the compliance issues associated with the national Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. VETiS is offered in the majority of schools in New South Wales (NSW), including Catholic Schools; however, there are varying levels of implementation within schools along with wide differences in student participation across schools.

With government and school leadership placing emphasis on the importance of VETiS as part of the curriculum, it is important to find out why some schools offer less VETiS than others, and why some schools have greater student take-up of VETiS than is found at other schools. Is this a result of limitations imposed by systems and situations which are difficult for schools to change, or is it caused by misunderstanding, misconceptions, or even ignorance, which—if left unchallenged—could have a detrimental impact on students’ academic choices, achievements, and ultimately, their career options?

The reasons behind the variation between schools in implementation and participation in VETiS were the focus of this research. The research, situated in rural New South Wales, reports the experiences of four systemic Catholic schools and their students when making decisions in relation to Higher School Certificate (HSC) subjects. The perspectives of the students, parents, teachers and leadership were sought in order to unpack potential reasons for variation among schools and to identify any contributing issues that may impact on VETiS as a subject area of choice.

The research utilised case study methodology, employing the epistemological approach of constructionism which is premised on the understanding that meaning is constructed rather than discovered. Constructionism focuses on the assumption that
knowledge and meaning as constructed by the participants forms the basis for making judgements and decisions. The issues of subject implementation and subject choice provided the framework for the suite of data collection instruments, using a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches in a multisite case study.

The research identified a number of major characteristics and factors that were found to affect the rate of participation and implementation of VETiS in specific schools. It was found that the combination of specific factors—including the characteristics of students, subject advice, school staff, subject decision processes, school leadership, school vision, school reputation and school culture—impacted on the number of courses implemented in schools and the participation rates of students.

The most significant overriding contribution to decision-making both by school leadership and students about VETiS was found to be the school culture, which is established and maintained by school leadership with the principal at the top. Most other issues—curriculum choice, information dissemination, staff attitudes and commitment, and parity of subjects—were found to be a consequence of the school culture and leadership beliefs. In schools where the leadership was responsive to policy and equity issues, the school processes were found to enhance the quality of information provided to students about these subjects—and foster real choice.

While the study focused on Catholic schools, the results give valuable insight into the VETiS experience which can be applied to the Australian educational sector more generally.
Acknowledgements

Reach high, for stars lie hidden in your soul.
Dream deep, for every dream precedes the goal.

Mother Teresa

I would like to thank my principal supervisor Associate Professor Charles Burford, my co-supervisor Associate Professor Denis McLaughlan and adjunct Professor Jim Watters for their expertise, interest and support in the planning, writing and editing phases of the research. Their professionalism, scholarship, friendship and encouragement have sustained me over the writing of this research and provided a window of opportunity to achieve my goals.

My appreciation also extends to the directors of the two diocese and to the system staff for their support in enabling and encouraging this study. I thank most humbly the schools involved in this research: the principals, VETiS teachers, parents and students who have so generously shared their experiences and have provided personal support and shown genuine interest in this study. The commitment of all involved in these Catholic schools to provide quality education for all students—and their enthusiasm for VETiS—helped to inspire this research in the first instance and motivate its completion.

I cannot submit this work without sharing my utmost gratitude to my dear friend Craig Couzens, who gave me the opportunity of changing careers in 1992 through his belief in me as a person. As a result of this opportunity, my career in adult education began and my journey in tertiary education was born. It is employers like this who inspire their workers to be the best they can be through seeing and valuing the individuals they lead.

The encouragement I have been given by my wonderful children Mitchell, Amanda and Samantha is truly valued; they have kept me on track, given support, provided me with great respite opportunities and understood the time involved to complete this work. Thank you also to my devoted parents; my mother would have been so proud.

I cannot express in words my appreciation to my husband Simon, who has inspired me in every way, given me the occasional motivating nudge and has never failed to encourage me in all that I have done.
Acronyms

For the purpose of this research, the following acronyms are provided to lend consistency and clarity in the usage of these terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACARA</td>
<td>Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACER</td>
<td>Australian Council for Educational Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTA</td>
<td>Australian National Training Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQF</td>
<td>Australian Qualifications Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQTF</td>
<td>Australian Quality Training Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARF</td>
<td>Australian Recognition Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASQA</td>
<td>Australian Skills Quality Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTF</td>
<td>Australian Student Traineeship Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATAR</td>
<td>Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVCTS</td>
<td>Australian Vocational Certificate Training System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOS</td>
<td>Board of Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOSLO</td>
<td>Board of Studies Liaison Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOSTES</td>
<td>Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVET</td>
<td>Board of Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Catholic Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAE</td>
<td>Colleges of Advanced Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Catholic Schools Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>eBOS</td>
<td>Electronic Board of Studies student management system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSC</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICF</td>
<td>Industry Curriculum Frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSEA</td>
<td>Index of Community Socio-Economic Advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLA</td>
<td>Key Learning Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCVER</td>
<td>National Centre for Vocational Education Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEA</td>
<td>National Education Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESA</td>
<td>NSW Education Standards Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTF</td>
<td>National Training Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCE</td>
<td>Queensland Certificate of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPL</td>
<td>Recognition of Prior Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>Registered Training Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBAT or SBA/T</td>
<td>School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACE</td>
<td>South Australian Certificate of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Socio Economic Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6</td>
<td>The final (senior) years of secondary schooling in New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Technical and Applied Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTC</td>
<td>Trade Training Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>TAFE-delivered Vocational Education and Training (for schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAC</td>
<td>University Admissions Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WACE</td>
<td>Western Australian Certificate of Education</td>
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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The importance of vocational education in schools is well-entrenched in Australian educational policy, as articulated in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008) and its predecessors. This study investigates the implementation of, and student participation in, Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) in seven schools as part of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) in the State of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. Of these seven schools, three served as pilot schools; detailed findings are not reported for these schools.

The four schools used in this research as case study sites can be identified as CSS1, CSS2, CSS3 and CSS4. Data gathered from these schools were used in developing the response to the research questions. The three pilot schools were utilised to develop and test the data gathering instruments of survey and interviews. Table 1-1 shows the schools used in this research, the schools in the Diocese RTO are the schools discussed in this chapter as a preamble to illustrate the motives driving this study.

Table 1-1
Schools and involvement in this research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Chapter 1 preamble</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Purpose of Participation</th>
<th>Diocesan RTO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Case Study School 1</td>
<td>Data to inform the research questions</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Case Study School 2</td>
<td>Data to inform the research questions and preamble</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Case Study School 3</td>
<td>Data to inform the research questions and preamble</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Case Study School 4</td>
<td>Data to inform the research questions and preamble</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Pilot School</td>
<td>Trial and develop research instruments</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This introductory chapter provides a background to the study (Section 1.1); an overview of the personal context of the researcher (Section 1.2); an examination of VETiS participation and post-school options in five schools (Section 1.3); a summary of the aims and research questions (Section 1.4); a description of the significance of the study (Section 1.5), and an outline of the thesis format (Section 1.6).

1.1 Background

VETiS in Australia has experienced many changes in the past century introduced by state education departments, along with intervention by federal government agencies. In Australia, school education is the responsibility of the various state governments but is funded by the Australian federal government. The vocational system of training has largely been associated throughout this time with post-secondary education for trade skills, predominantly apprenticeships and traineeships. Policy shifts have taken VETiS from a state responsibility to the current coordinated response led by Australian government initiatives.

The federal government initiated a series of reviews between the late 1980s and early 1990s of young people’s participation in post-compulsory education and training, which led to the implementation of the current VETiS programs in 1996 (Malley & Keating, 2000). These programs enabled nationally-accredited qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) to be integrated into secondary school certificates. The aim of the VETiS program was to increase and expand opportunities for students in the post-compulsory senior years of secondary studies and to provide relevant skills to prepare students for the transition from school to work. The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), which comprises all state ministers responsible for school education and vocational training as well as the federal ministers, supported
these programs by developing an implementation guide for schools emphasising the importance of VETiS.

Vocational education in schools assists all young people to secure their own futures by enhancing their transition to a broad range of post-school options and pathways. (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2001, p. 11)

In 1997, the federal government committed $20 million per year for three years to further develop prescribed forms of VETiS in secondary schools. During this time, acceptance of the national vocational education by schools and state and territory school boards enabled VETiS subjects to be delivered as part of senior secondary certificates of education. VETiS was formally implemented in 1998 when the Ministers of Education declared that “Boards of Studies, in agreement with state/territory recognition authorities, will recognise as VETiS only that which delivers national industry and/or enterprise competency standards” (Education Council, 1998, p. 35).

Since 1998, the state governments have continued to support VETiS and to encourage greater participation by students and implementation by schools through policy and funding opportunities. The Hobart Declaration on Schooling, implemented in 1989, established a commitment by all states and territories to improving Australian schooling through a national collaborative framework (Australian Education Council, 1989). VETiS programs were further supported in 1999 by the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century.

The Adelaide Declaration contained a range of references to VETiS. Goal 3.6 stated that “Schooling should be socially just, so that all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training” (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1999, p. 3).

The Declaration also promoted linkages with vocational education, careers, enterprise education and key competencies (Malley & Keating, 2000). The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians 2008 (Ministerial

The Melbourne Declaration set new goals for the next decade and stated that “achieving these educational goals is the collective responsibility of governments, school sectors and individual schools as well as parents and carers, young Australians, families, other education and training providers, business and the broader community” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 7). VETiS complements the Declaration’s first goal of promoting equity and excellence, and its commitment to providing alternative pathways to meet the diverse capabilities of students. The Declaration’s second goal also promotes VETiS through its commitment to enabling all young Australians to become successful learners. The Melbourne Declaration notes that a feature of being a successful learner is that learners are “on a pathway towards continued success in further education, training or employment, and acquire the skills to make informed learning and employment decisions throughout their lives” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 8). VETiS programs are listed as a qualification on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), and as such demonstrate a pathway to higher level qualifications.

In 2009, MCEETYA published a four-year plan in response to the Melbourne Declaration. This plan identified key strategies all directly or indirectly relating to VETiS and stated that Australian governments will support (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2009):

- Increasing access to and participation in high quality, industry-recognised training at Certificate III level for secondary school students, including through Trades Training Centres.
- Ensuring learning in the senior years is supported by access to computers, online tools and resources, and teaching expertise in using information and communication technologies (ICT).
- Partnerships with universities, Registered Training Organisations, TAFE and businesses, to broaden the horizons of students, support educators and provide students with links to further training, education and employment opportunities.
- Providing stimulating and relevant experiences, excursions and school–community links for senior years’ students.
- Ensuring all students have access to quality support, information and advice to facilitate access to further education, training, careers, and employment options.
- Development and implementation of the Australian Blueprint for Career Development, a national project to develop a framework for lifelong, active career management skills.
- Increasing access to differentiated and coordinated support and assistance for young people likely to disengage or those who have disengaged from education and training.
- Ensuring students and parents, particularly those in low socio economic status schools have access to extended services such as out of school activities and community development resources. (p. 12)

As a result of these federal government policy and funding initiatives, most NSW secondary schools offer students VETiS courses in some fashion. Some VETiS courses are studied as part of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) at external Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) off school grounds; some are internally delivered by school system RTOs by appropriately qualified school staff as part of the regular timetable; and some are delivered through apprenticeships or traineeships. With similar opportunities afforded to schools it is of interest whether all students have similar opportunities to select VETiS. It is this researcher’s experience that VETiS implementation and participation varies greatly among schools.

In Australia, Catholic schools have been providing education for over 180 years. Catholic education refers to primary, secondary and tertiary education provided within the Australian education system provided by the Roman Catholic Church. In 2010, there were 1700 Catholic Schools and approximately 20% of school students attended a Catholic School (National Catholic Education Commission, 2010). The roles and responsibilities of Catholic schools have changed since they were first implemented in Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, according to ‘Catholic Schools at a Crossroad’ which outlines the vision for Catholic education (Catholic Bishops of NSW, 2007). Demographic and economic change has meant that the poor are no longer-over represented in Catholic schools. While Catholic schools continue to embrace the traditional responsibility for religious and other education, there is now a responsibility to meet the educational needs for a different mix of students.
According to research undertaken by the National Centre for Vocational Research (NCVER) students from the government school sector are more likely to be engaged in VETiS. In 2016 36% of students in government schools participated in VETiS, in contrast 25% of students in Catholic schools participated in these subjects (Misko, Korbel, & Blomberg, 2017).

1.2 Personal context

Between 2004 and 2014 the researcher was employed as an education officer for vocational education for a system of non-government schools. The position involved supporting the quality delivery of VETiS and managing the RTO in this delivery. Prior to this role the researcher was employed as a consultant with the Board of Adult and Community Education, servicing a cluster of Adult and Community Education (ACE) VET providers across Southern NSW and Northern Victoria. The researcher’s experience in the area of vocational education spans over twenty-five years in the community, secondary and tertiary education sectors.

The impetus for this study has come from personal interest in the issues associated with the variation of growth in VETiS participation and delivery in systemic Catholic secondary schools. Having witnessed the value which employers and industry place on skilled workers through VET in the adult education environment, the researcher developed a deep interest in exploring ways to maximise the opportunities through VETiS for students in schools when making the transition to post-compulsory school life.

The research has been driven by the researcher’s personal belief that education and training should be relevant to the needs, interests and/or vocational pursuits of learners. Relevance in learning is influenced by current interests, level of enjoyment experienced and how the subject material can be of benefit to ultimate career goals. Motivation and the capacity to perform well in a subject can be directly reflective of how relevant the subject material and outcomes are perceived to be to each learner. It was important to the researcher to understand whether the needs, interests and/or vocational pursuits of learners were considered in the implementation of and participation in VETiS.
It is the opinion of the researcher that school systems would have a greater opportunity for maximising student engagement, retention and achievement through consideration of the range of student needs and by encouraging students to undertake study pathways relevant to the individual.

This research was predicated on the researcher’s belief that all Australian students should have equal access to subject offerings within their schooling experience and that external influences, such as/stakeholders, can impact positively or negatively on opportunity to study VETiS and uptake of VETiS subjects in senior secondary education. It was of interest whether such equality is feasible in the consideration of practical aspects related to subject implementation and participation within schools. Why such equality in the offering of VETiS courses differs among schools is at the core of this research.

1.3 VETiS participation

The Adelaide and Melbourne Declarations clearly confirm the various state education ministers’ commitment to VETiS on a national level. This section examines how the outcome of this commitment is evidenced in participation rates at the national level and within the NSW state Catholic sector, and more particularly within the five rural schools in one diocese whose experience were the impetus for this study, identified as schools A-E in this chapter. These five schools are used initially to demonstrate the motivations which drove this study. Three of these schools were then incorporated as case site schools, two as pilot schools. Another two schools from a different diocese (one case and one pilot) were invited to participate to increase the anonymity of the schools and participants in the following chapters.

This section discusses national VETiS participation trends together with VETiS participation in one rural diocese for school delivered VETiS, external provision of VETiS and school based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBAT). The term VETiS on the national level refers to both in school and externally delivered VET subjects. The acronym refers to Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools (subjects that the Board of Studies deem acceptable for inclusion in the Higher School Certificate). The difference between the terms VET and VETiS is who the participants, VET is the broader term for Vocational Education and Training whereas
VETiS refers to this type of education being delivered as part of secondary schooling. School delivered VETiS is offered as a subject within the curriculum, taught by teachers of the school and managed by the diocesan RTO. External provision of VETiS is an alternative to school based subjects, delivered by non-diocesan RTOs and usually conducted at the RTO premises by trainers and assessors. SBAT however, refers to VETiS subjects delivered in combination with contracted employment. The theoretical components may be delivered within the school or externally, however the practical employment component can be used towards unit requirements for school completion.

1.3.1 National VETiS participation

Between 1998-2006, VETiS enrolments by secondary students had more than doubled and in 2004 VETiS represented 35% of Year 11 and 12 (Stage 6) enrolments in NSW schools (Evans, 2005). The NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET) stated in its strategic plan for 2008-2010 that 37% of NSW Stage 6 students were enrolled in a VETiS course in 2006 (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2008).

*Figure 1-1* shows the national participation trends in VETiS between 1996 and 2003. There was rapid growth nationally in VETiS participation from its introduction in 1996, when 16% of senior secondary school students participated in these programs; its popularity had grown to almost 50% in 2003.

*Figure 1-1* National participation in VETiS (Anlezark, Karmel, & Ong, 2006, p. 10)
In 2007, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) collated a report on VETiS based on data collected by MCEETYA, compiled under the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2009).

This report found that:

- In 2007, 174,800 school students studied VETiS, representing 33.4% of school students undertaking a senior secondary certificate indicating an increase of 1.8% on 2006.
- VETiS students comprised 15,000 school-based apprentices and trainees (SBATs) indicating an increase from 2006 of 15.8%.
- 159,800 students enrolled in other VETiS programs (VETiS courses delivered as part of the secondary certificate), which increased from 2006 by 0.7%. (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2009, p. 6)

The report undertaken by NCVER shows that growth in VETiS continued to rise in 2007. The next section examines the participation trends in five rural NSW systemic Catholic secondary schools, which underpin the motivations for this research. Another term for secondary school is high school.

1.3.2 Rural NSW Catholic secondary school VETiS participation in one diocese

The experiences of five systemic Catholic secondary schools in a rural diocese within the state of NSW are discussed in the introduction to this study, as outlined in 1.3. They are referred to as schools A, B, C, D and E. It is important to note that only three of these five schools were included in the final research as Case Site Schools: these were school B (which became Case Site School 2, CSS2), school C (which became Case Site School 4, CSS4) and school E (which became Case Site School 3, CSS3). Schools A and D were included only as pilot schools. Case Site School 1 and a third pilot school are not discussed in this preamble. The subsequent addition of these two schools was intended to increase the anonymity of the schools within the study given the small number of schools in the selected geographical area of NSW. The experiences of non-government Catholic schools in VETiS implementation was of interest, and these schools were particularly accessible to the researcher.
These five schools are part of a group that operates under one RTO, this allows each of these schools to deliver nationally-accredited vocational training within the school curriculum. Qualifications offered and student participation in these varies among these schools. In 2010, five qualifications were delivered at school A, four in schools C and E, and two in schools B and D. Attention now turns to participation in vocational education in these schools.

1.3.2.1 VETiS participation across schools A-E

VETiS participation among the five RTO schools also varies; Figure 1-2 shows participation rates in VETiS courses for these schools in relation to the entire Year 11 and 12 (Stage 6) enrolments from 2005 to 2009 (NSW Board of Studies, 2013).

![Figure 1-2 Stage 6 VETiS enrolments, schools A-E, 2005-2010](image)

Figure 1-2 demonstrates the varying enrolments among the five initial schools and shows that enrolments in VETiS have increased over the six-year period in schools C and E. However, enrolments have decreased in school A, B and D. The variation of enrolment trends among schools leads to questions as to the potential reasons, barriers and enablers that may have impacted on these trends.

The following section considers the difference between Year 11 and Year 12 enrolments in the five schools and highlights the issue of retention.
1.3.2.2 Differences in VETiS participation between Year 11 and Year 12, schools A–E

The characteristics of students electing to continue to study VETiS from Year 11 to Year 12 also vary among these five schools. Experience suggests that some students have no intention of completing Year 12 (or the Higher School Certificate) and are actively looking for employment during Year 11. Some of these students find employment, others choose alternative forms of training, some decide to leave and the rest continue at school.

Consequently, those students who do not continue to Year 12 do not complete the AQF qualification in which they initially enrolled while at school. The following data show (NSW Board of Studies, 2013) the variation between the five schools in enrolment percentages of whole cohorts in Year 11 in comparison to enrolment percentages in Year 12 for the same cohort. In some cases, enrolment percentages are lower in Year 12 for the same cohort and in other cases it is higher. Where enrolment percentages are lower the reason may be due to students leaving the school at the end of Year 11, as speculated on above, or due to students electing not to study VETiS in Year 12. Where higher, the reason may be due to students who had not studied VETiS in Year 11 deciding to study these subjects in Year 12. Figure 1-3 shows the proportion of cohort enrolment and retention trends across the five schools between 2005 and 2010.
In 2005, Year 11 enrolments were considerably lower than in 2008, while Year 12 enrolments were considerably higher. Enrolments for both years at school A increased in 2006 and stayed relatively steady in 2007, but fell in 2008. In school B, 8% fewer students studied VETiS in Year 12 compared to the Year 11 enrolments for the same cohort in 2005 and 2008. In 2006 and 2007 increased enrolments were evident in VETiS courses at this school. At school C there were 5–10% fewer students studying VETiS in Year 12 compared to the Year 11 enrolments in all years except 2005. In 2005 increased enrolments at school C were evident in VETiS courses. At school D there were 2–10% fewer students studying VETiS in Year 12 compared to the Year 11 enrolments in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008. School E experienced 2-8% fewer students studying VETiS in Year 12 compared to the Year 11 enrolments in all years except 2007. In 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 increased enrolments at school E were evident in VETiS courses.

1.3.2.3 External provision of VETiS to students

VETiS courses can also be delivered by other RTOs such as institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFEs) on behalf of the school. This option is known as TAFE Vocational Education and Training (TVET). These courses are usually offered to students by the external provider in facilities outside the school. External provision of VETiS can widen the curriculum offerings and also combine student enrolments.
from a number of schools to make courses viable for the RTO. Data related to TVET participation has been sourced from TAFE invoices to the RTO for TVET delivery to students.

![Graph showing TVET enrolments, Schools A-E](image)

**Figure 1-4 TVET enrolments, Schools A-E**

Between 2005 and 2010, schools B, C, D and E have experienced an overall decrease in numbers of TVET enrolments, as can be seen in Figure 1-4. Most significant is the decrease in enrolments at School D. TVET funding awarded to non-government Catholic schools during this time was given to the then Catholic Education Commission, now Catholic Schools NSW, for distribution, which then issued it to two groups: either diocesan systemic schools or independent Catholic schools as a group. Systemic schools were allocated funding to distribute between their schools. The independent Catholic schools were allocated funding per school. As some independent Catholic schools had low take-up of these funds, more funds were available to other independent Catholic schools. This may have been due to the tendency of independent Catholic schools, which are those run or affiliated with religious orders, to focus on academic subjects with the result that VETiS courses are a low priority. School D was an independent Catholic school during this period, then became a systemic Catholic school in 2007, accounting for the initial high participation trend followed by a rapid decline.

External provision of VETiS impacts on the cost of schooling to both the students and the system. External providers charge fees for the courses students undertake.
Systemic Catholic schools receive partial funding which equates to approximately 50% of the cost of these courses. The remaining 50% is drawn from system subsidisation or student fees (personal communication, P Rodney, VETiS State Manager, Catholic Education Commission, May 2009). Between 2005 and 2010, TAFE was the only external provider of VETiS courses for these schools, although some private providers acted as an RTO for some traineeships.

1.3.2.4 School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs)

School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) are another option for students to study Vocational Education and Training courses while still formally enrolled at school. SBAT participation rates have been very low in schools A–E since VETiS has been implemented. Table 1-2 shows that while all schools have been involved in SBATs, the numbers are small and the retention of these students from Year 11 to Year 12 is 50% or less. Armed with this information it is of interest to this research to consider the underlying reasons that may have impacted on retention trends.

Each school has experienced student interest in SBATs which are supported by local employers. However, the low retention rates of SBATs are of concern. The low retention could be as a result of students transitioning from school into full-time apprenticeships or traineeships: a positive outcome. Alternatively, students, schools or employers may decide not to continue with the SBAT opportunity due to concerns such as lack of flexibility in the school timetable (which affects both students and employers) or the perceived negative impact on other subject areas (which affects students and the school itself). These experiences may have a negative influence on the attitude of school leadership attitude towards SBATs and their perceived capacity to work within the school curriculum, as well as the subsequent suitability of SBATs for their students.
Table 1-2

SBAT participation in schools A-E, 2005-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of SBATs Commenced</th>
<th>SBAT Industry Area</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Number of SBATs Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Automotive</td>
<td>4 (A, B, C &amp; E)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Retail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Agriculture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Retail</td>
<td>1 (A)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Retail</td>
<td>2 (A &amp; C)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>• Retail</td>
<td>4 (A, B, C &amp; E)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Hairdressing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Plumbing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Auto Electrical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Carpentry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>• Pharmacy</td>
<td>4 (A, B, C &amp; D)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Retail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Hospitality</td>
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1.3.3 Post-school options

NSW students undertaking VETiS courses which have been endorsed by the NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA]¹ as framework courses may elect to undertake the optional HSC examination to enable the VETiS course to be used in the Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking (ATAR) for university admission.

¹ The NSW Board of Studies was the state government education board from 1990 to 2013. The Board of Studies amalgamated with the NSW Institute of Teachers on 1 January 2014 to form the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES). This was replaced on 1 January 2017 by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).
NESA in accordance with the University Admissions Centre (UAC) policies allows one VETiS course to be included in an ATAR score, yet the students may study more than one VETiS course for their HSC. The HSC and the ATAR are different. The HSC is the certificate issued by NESA after students have completed the required subjects for that credential. The ATAR is a ranking made up of standardised examination/assessment mark for eligible Year 12 subjects; not all VETiS subjects are eligible for inclusion in an ATAR and those that eligible may have optional examinations. Subsequently, the HSC has different requirements to an ATAR and students can choose subjects which can result in the awarding of one or both. The NSW HSC examination results come in the form of bands, Band 1 being the lowest band possible—and therefore the smallest contributor to an ATAR—and Band 6 being the highest.

All of the schools under the RTO (schools A-E) strongly encourage the students in VETiS courses to complete the optional HSC examination, and some schools in fact make the exam compulsory for their students. As a result, the vast majority of students in schools A-E undertake the HSC examination. Examination of the statistics on combined student performance across these schools indicates that students can gain good results in their VETiS HSC examinations, subsequently contributing to the ATAR for university entrance (see Figure 1-5). This figure also shows the outcomes for government “State” school students for the 2010 HSC examination (NSW Board of Studies, 2013).
Figure 1-5 shows HSC results for VETiS classes in these schools and the State for the 2010 HSC exam, this year is used as a typical example. In all courses 63% of students under the RTO (schools A-E) achieved a Band 4 or higher. In Information Technology 53% of RTO students achieved a Band 5. In Hospitality and Business Services more than 37% of RTO students achieved a Band 5 or 6. If HSC examination results are an important consideration for students embarking on their HSC journey, and VETiS courses are known to serve students well, it raises the question of why some schools have declining VETiS enrolments.

1.4 Aims and research questions

As shown in the data above, participation rates varied significantly between schools A–E as a proportion of Stage 6 enrolments. This research aims to explore the possible reasons that may affect overall participation. These reasons will be explored from two perspectives: the implementation of VETiS programs by schools, and the take-up of VETiS subjects by students.

There was also variation between the number and type of VETiS delivery among schools A–E. In these schools, between two and five VETiS subjects were offered.
and the type of VETiS subjects offered also varied. Some schools had experienced growth in VETiS courses offered and others had only ever offered the same courses. The issue of variance is reflected in VETiS delivery strategies, in external TVET subjects and in SBATs.

1.4.1 Research problem

Much research has been undertaken to ascertain the value of VETiS in secondary schooling as a contributor to the senior secondary school certificates in Australia, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. National statistics indicate a growth in VETiS as well as in SBATs. This growth does not appear to be reflected consistently in schools A–E as revealed in the previous section.

Despite the importance placed on VETiS by national educational bodies, there appears to be no consistency in the offering of these courses by systemic Catholic schools in NSW and in their participation by students (personal communication, P Rodney, VETiS State Manager, Catholic Education Commission, May 2009).

The problem is that Catholic secondary schools have little independent information relating to factors which impact VETiS implementation and enrolment. This information would be useful in assisting schools to address any factors which might hinder VETiS implementation and wider participation.

1.4.2 Research questions

The Main Research Question is:

What influences student and school leadership decision-making regarding selection and offering of VETiS courses in Catholic secondary schools?

Three Specific Research Questions focus this research, being:

1. What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?
2. What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
3. How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?
1.5 Significance

This study is important for the following three reasons. First, government policy supported by funding initiatives emphasises the importance of providing curriculum choices relevant to all students. Government strategies have been aimed at promoting VETiS through providing industry-standard training environments in school and through educational reforms. These strategies and reforms have attempted to increase the status of VETiS and allow these subjects to experience parity of esteem with other subjects. However, there continues to be disparity among schools in enrolment and implementation (Anlezark et al., 2006, p. 13). It is anticipated that regional Catholic secondary schools in NSW would experience similar participation rates in VETiS courses to the five schools discussed earlier, given their similarities in location, rural character, population and skills shortages. Data in relation to the motivators and influences in implementation and enrolment in such programs have not previously been available, yet are essential for education planning. This research will aim to identify barriers and influences that can inform national, state and systemic policy and funding. This in turn will improve educational practice at the local level and will better meet the needs of diversity among Australian secondary students.

Second, there is a lacuna in the academic literature surrounding choice of VETiS as a subject by secondary school students in Australia and the influences accounting for these choices. There is also a lack of independent academic study in the area of VETiS implementation and participation in NSW regional schools. Such empirical evidence will make available, to school leadership, practical strategies which support VETiS subject selection, career advice and planning for VETiS within the school’s curriculum at the local level.

Third, information may reveal whether the variations experienced among schools are caused largely by external factors or by attitudes. Development of a synthesis of key findings outlining the factors affecting implementation and take-up, together with a set of recommendations, would enable policy makers and systemic Catholic decision makers to implement strategies to enhance the success of VETiS in regional systemic Catholic schools.
1.6 Thesis format

The thesis is organised into ten chapters. Chapter 2 reviews relevant research literature pertaining to the historical development of VETiS, to factors affecting student subject selection, and to factors affecting subject implementation decisions. The review highlights sociological and economic influences that contribute to student and school leadership decisions and perceptions in relation to VETiS. Chapter 3 discusses the design of the research and methodologies that support this framework. Chapters 4–7 present the results of the study for each case study school, which are then presented comparatively in Chapter 8. Chapter 9 is a discussion of the findings. Chapter 10 concludes the study and draws implications for both practice and theory.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduced an initial study which examined the experiences of five regional Catholic schools in the implementation of VETiS and in student participation in, VETiS programs. It provided a rationale for the research together with an outline of the thesis.
CHAPTER 2: Literature review

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature concerning VETiS, its implementation and participation, with a view to understanding the factors that influence the adoption of these courses in regional Catholic secondary schools in Australia, in particular New South Wales.

2.1 Scholarly literature in relation to Australian VETiS

A literature review of research in VETiS and related topics was systematically conducted through examination of databases such as ProQuest Central, A+ Education, University Thesis Worldwide, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, utilising advanced search options in all databases. Google Scholar—which includes most peer-reviewed online academic journals, books, conference papers, theses, dissertations and other scholarly literature—was also used. Keywords and phrases used included: VETiS; Vocational Education and Training in Schools; VET in schools; vocationalism in schools; subject selection in schools; career and subject selection; subject implementation in schools; curriculum choice; dual VET; vocational schooling; and TVET.

Searches were initially conducted with no time parameters to ensure that salient older literature was not ignored; the search was then refined to include peer-reviewed publications and research conducted within the last ten years. The literature search considered documents for relevance against the research question and problem, both from international and Australian sources.

The search for national and international research theses on VET in secondary schools identified that there has been little scholarly research undertaken relating to student choice and school implementation of VETiS courses. The search was then expanded to include other types of research, including peer-reviewed national and international journals, conference papers and reports.

An important source of publications in the Australian context is the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. NCVER has undertaken or commissioned government-funded research in this area which has provided valuable insight into the
research problem. NCVER describes itself as the Australian “national professional body responsible for collecting, managing, analysing and communicating research and statistics on the Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector”. NCVER research has strict quality assurance processes which includes data checking, peer review, referencing requirements and style guide prior to approval for publishing (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2015).

As very little scholarly research has been undertaken on the implementation and take-up of VETiS, the literature search was restricted to the major aspects of the research question. It is evident that there have been few studies that have investigated the correlation between subject decisions by all stakeholders and the implementation/take-up of VETiS programs.

The next section explores the development of a framework in which to locate the literature relevant to this research.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The research of Bronfenbrenner (1994) informed the conceptual framework utilised within this study. Bronfenbrenner’s model acknowledges that an individual is influenced by a range of connecting external pulls and pushes when making decisions. Figure 2-1 shows Bronfenbrenner’s model which can be applied to the present research in order to identify the interplay between the individual, environment and culture in determining the take-up of VETiS.
This literature review explores the potential influences that underpin decisions made by school leadership, personnel and students when considering the implementation and take-up of VETiS. Bronfenbrenner identified that other people, systems, environment and culture influence the decisions which individuals and organisations make. Bronfenbrenner’s model informed the literature review which was organised to consider these influences.

The influences explored in relation to the implementation of VETiS are:

- Policy and the national training agenda—exosystem (education and political systems).
- Resourcing—exosystem (economic system).
- External provision—microsystem (school and immediate environments).
- School and community expectations—microsystem (school, friends, family and neighbourhood), exosystem (industry) and mesosystem (the connections between systems and microsystems).
- School and system leadership—techno-subsystem (individual), exosystem (education systems, economic systems, laws, political systems).
systems), macrosystem (norms and values of the culture) and mesosystem (the connections between systems and microsystems).

The influences explored in relation to the take-up of VETiS were:

- Parent expectation—microsystem (family) and techno-subsystem (individual).
- School personnel, peer and employer influence—microsystem (family, friends, and school staff) and techno-subsystem (individual).
- School culture—microsystem (friends, school staff), macrosystem (norms and values of the culture) and mesosystem (the connections between systems and microsystems).
- Parity of esteem—microsystem (friends, school staff), macrosystem (norms and values of the culture) and mesosystem (the connections between systems and microsystems).
- Career aspirations— techno-subsystem (individual), microsystem (family), exosystem (industry) and mesosystem (the connections between systems and microsystems).

Figure 2-2 Literature review concept map

The concept map of the literature review shown in Figure 2-2 is a visual presentation of the issues and influences associated with the research that were discovered in the
literature search. Figure 2-2 outlines diagrammatically the influences on student choice in relation to VETiS subjects and implementation by schools of VETiS subjects, as found within a search of the empirical research and literature in this field.

Two focus areas that relate directly to schools are influences relating to subject implementation by schools and subject uptake by students. These influences have the potential to be either barriers or enablers for VETiS uptake and implementation. Within the literature on school subject offerings, five central influences were found: policy/national training agenda; resourcing; cost of external provision; school/community expectations; and leadership. The literature search also identified a number of contributing factors which can affect student subject selection. These factors can be grouped into five central influences: parent expectation; stakeholder influence; school culture; parity of esteem; and career aspirations.

2.3 Sequence of the literature review

This review explores the literature and research as outlined in the concept map. First the review will explore the five influences associated with school implementation of VETiS (Section 2.4). The following section (Section 2.5) will explore literature and research regarding the five influences associated with the uptake of VETiS by students. This analysis of the literature will assist in identifying issues that may affect school leadership decisions to offer and students’ decisions to participate in VETiS. In conclusion, Section 2.6 draws together the findings of the literature review relevant to the research question.
Figure 2-3 Literature review map, issues and influences

Figure 2-3 diagrammatically sets out the literature review concept map issues and influences. The diagram also recognises that students make choices not only in relation to school subject choices, but also in relation to whether to continue on at the school, wish to leave school or to leave to go to another school, a post-school education provider or to seek employment.

2.4 School implementation of VETiS

Five influences impacting school subject offerings were identified in the literature. These are:

- Policy and the national training agenda;
- Resourcing;
- Cost of external provision;
- School and community expectations; and
• School and system leadership.

The empirical research reported in the literature which is related to these five influences is summarised in Figure 2-4.

In the next five subsections, research and literature will be explored further with the intention of outlining the key findings these authors identified. In Section 2.4.1, the development of policy and its influence on the establishment of VETiS is discussed. The emergence of VETiS as a core part of a modern senior secondary curriculum is an important contextual consideration in this study. Section 2.4.2 explores the importance of adequate industry-standard equipment and suitably qualified teachers/trainers in the provision of VETiS. The cost of external provision is discussed in Section 2.4.3. In Section 2.4.4 the influence of community expectations on VETiS implementation is considered. School and system leadership influence is explored in Section 2.4.5.
2.4.1 Policy imperatives

There is international interest in large-scale reforms to senior secondary education (particularly in relation to the incorporation of vocational education), associated public policy making and how these influence the education agenda. Interest has been expressed by such bodies as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (R. Harreveld & Singh, 2007).

Figure 2-4 Literature review map, school subject implementation
Lamb (2009), a leading researcher on international educational systems, argues how Vocational Education and Training has made a significant contribution to student learning pathways in many countries, by increasing both work and education skills:

In some nations, VETiS is now the dominant pathway in the senior school years in terms of enrolments, and one that can promote high levels of learning achievement. (p. 117)

For example, the expansion of vocational education in China has been dramatic, with the Chinese government aiming at a 50:50 ratio of enrolment between vocational and general schools at the senior secondary level (Yang, 2007). Initial vocational education and training (IVET) is now a normal part of the upper secondary education in Europe (European Commission, 2010). The German system offers a three part secondary school system post year 10: Hauptschule (does not qualify for university entrance), Gymnasium (designed to prepare students for university entrance) and Realschule (is more vocationally-oriented) (UK-German Connection, 2018). In the English education system, 14–19 education covers both academic and vocational subjects and the majority of students take some form of vocational qualification which include well-established routes into higher education and skilled employment (Wolf, 2011). However, researchers from the Institute for the Study of Labor in Germany analysed Vocational Education and Training systems around the world. They found that most countries have forms of vocational training—industry-based, school-based or mixed. Their analysis suggested that in developed countries where distinct systems existed, students who completed school-based vocational education performed as well as students who chose academic pathways, and sometimes even better (Eichorst, Rodriguez-Planas, Schmidl, & Zimmermann, 2015). They also noted from other previous studies that in developing countries vocational systems in both school and post-school education are less developed.

Government policies for education influence the direction of schools in Australia. Australia’s federal, state and territories. According to the National Education Agreement (NEA) one of the goals agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) was to increase the education attainment rates to Year 12 or equivalent by 2020 (n.d., 2015). These policy directions had implications for VETiS. It required educators to implement innovative and sustainable pathways to engage
young people in their learning and to subsequently complete Year 12 or equivalent (Klatt, Polesel, Dulfer, Starr, & Blake, 2016). The current system of VETiS was in response to government initiatives which have reconceptualised and redesigned senior secondary education to meet the learning needs of all young people between the ages of 15 and 17 years (R. Harreveld & Singh, 2007).

The Australian national agenda for education and training reform has been shaped through several decades of education and social research, legislative changes and policy development (Carmichael, 1992; Deveson, 1990; Finn, 1991; Mayer & corporate author, 1992; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2000). The next section shows the journey of Australian schooling in terms of vocational education and the national training agenda.

2.4.1.1 Australian National Training Agenda

Australian Vocational Education and Training has experienced a variety of policy changes by state education departments along with intervention by federal government agencies since Federation 2 in 1901. These policy shifts have taken Vocational Education and Training from a state responsibility towards a coordinated national response led by federal government initiatives. Malley and Keating (2000) identified four periods where policy changes affected vocational education in schools up until 2000. Historical and policy reflection aims to illuminate why stakeholders may hold certain perceptions about vocational training and its value, which may ultimately be reflected in implementation and uptake decisions.

The first period identified by Malley and Keating (2000), spanning the years from pre-Federation till the 1960s, saw individual states maintaining vocational education within schools. The second period commenced in 1964 when the federal government initiated a national system, changing senior technical institutes into Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs), which were able to confer degree-level awards. A focus on skills for employment inadvertently reinforced the belief of a need for types of secondary schooling with different aims: either

\[2\] Australia became an independent nation on 1 January 1901 when the British Parliament passed legislation allowing the six Australian colonies to govern in their own right as part of the Commonwealth of Australia.
employment/apprenticeship transition or academic pathways (Malley & Keating, 2000). In the 1970s there were concerns that the system of technical secondary schools developed in response to this need stratified students in that students were unable to achieve the appropriate qualification to gain access to university (Karmel, 2007).

By the early 1970s the federal government began to question the effectiveness of the state training systems, and a series of reviews were instigated. This resulted in a definition of vocational education which treated it exclusively as post-school education, separating technical education and trades-based training from secondary schools, and consolidated this type of education into post-school TAFE colleges and institutes (Malley & Keating, 2000).

Kangan’s (1974) review provided direction for policy on a sectoral definition of what the TAFE sector provided and of vocational learning. During this time the transition of youth from school to work changed: youth unemployment had increased by 10%, secondary school retention had increased by 25% and apprenticeship statistics exhibited fluctuation. Such was this volatile environment amid the establishment of post-school structures for vocational learning that another set of reviews were initiated from the mid-1970s. From these reviews three policy issues were identified which continue to influence Vocational Education and Training provision. These were:

1. Quality and organisation of the senior years of schooling, and the limited options for students who did not transition to university. An OECD review noted the low levels of retention and lack of pathways for youth into jobs and further structured training.
2. Acknowledgement of emerging technologies and global competition in relation to improving national skill levels.
3. The major reform to skills training in this time was the implementation of traineeships, which allowed for shorter and more flexible indentured training in a wider range of vocational areas. (Malley & Keating, 2000, pp. 633-634)

Eventually this initiative led to the development of national middle-level post-school education in 1974 through the TAFE system. The TAFE system further separated policy-defined vocational education from secondary schooling. From the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, the majority of secondary school systems withdrew from formally
providing Vocational Education and Training (Malley & Keating, 2000) and thus students left school to study vocational subjects at TAFE.

During this time there was an increasing expectation that school-based vocational learning should be placed in mainstream curricula to address the needs of students, many of whom were failing to complete Year 12. In order to address this problem, federally-funded initiatives offered vocational programs within schools. Malley and Keating (2000) argued that these were not included within the mainstream academic structures of state education departments, and were run as vocational programs in addition to the curriculum.

The third period of policy change can be identified between the late 1980s and 1992. Reviews identified education, social and labour market goals which saw the focus placed on preparing young people for employment as one of the concepts of linkage (Malley & Keating, 2000). These authors also reported that youth employment indicators were showing negative trends by the late 1980s. Youth unemployment had increased to 17%, yet school retention rates had improved to 77% by 1992; students were staying in school longer, yet high youth unemployment was evident. These trends gave rise to concerns about the effectiveness of the training and education systems in relation to industry requirements. Their report reflected concerns identified from another series of federal government-commissioned reviews which highlighted problems of:

- TAFE colleges not being directly connected with or responsive to industry. (Deveson, 1990)
- No defined targets for youth participation in training and education, lack of structured learning pathways from school to work and insufficient jobs with structured training pathways. (Finn, 1991)
- Lack of key competencies in schools to prepare youth for life and work. (Australian Education Council. Mayer Committee, 1992)

In response to these reports, governments established structural reforms for entry-level training, including recommendations regarding the implementation of part-time school and work pathways for traineeships and apprenticeships. The structural reforms proposed by Carmichael (1992) were known as the Australian Vocational Certificate Training System (AVCTS), which was conditionally endorsed in 1992 by the various state Ministers of Education.
In addition to these reviews, four national priorities for Australian education and training systems were established which are highly relevant to current VETiS practice (Malley & Keating, 2000):

1. Setting of national targets for youth for participation and attainment in education, employment and training;
2. Setting of key competencies (known as the Mayer Key Competencies) to be achieved by all students prior to finishing school;
3. Creation of a broader range of pathways within school for vocational skills including mixes of both work and school options; and
4. Connection of qualification pathways between the various sectors of education and training (p. 636)

The fourth period commenced in 1992 with the shifting of policy in response to the observations and recommendations from the previous review period. Three types of vocationalism emerged during this time: locally-based vocationalism driven by youth needs; state-based vocationalism driven by general education systems within institutional frameworks; and a national vocationalism based on the Vocational Education and Training sector, industry perspectives and a demand for competency-based training (Malley & Keating, 2000).

In 1992 the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) was established to assist Australia “to improve its international economic competitiveness by developing a national vocational education and training system, which is responsive to the needs of individuals and industry” (Australian National Training Authority, 1994, p. 6). Subsequently the National Training Framework (NTF) and the Australian Recognition Framework (ARF) were introduced in 1996 and 1997 respectively.

Key components in the national training framework were (Malley & Keating, 2000)

- The establishment of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which listed every nationally recognised qualification from the VETiS sector from Certificates I–IV, school leaving certificates and university qualifications in a detailed and scaled ladder. This AQF ladder provided a nationally-consistent framework for recognising skills with qualifications and enabled the development of subsequent pathways for training.
• Endorsement of Training Packages (TPs) which were developed by industry in consideration of the varying job types within the industry, and the related skills required to undertake specific jobs. This allowed for a flexible approach to learning and the concept of recognition of prior learning (RPL) to facilitate entry into courses of study or advanced standing.

• Approval of the Australian Recognition Framework (ARF) in 1997, which provided a coordinated approach to national recognition of VET between states and territories, industries and RTOs. (p. 638)

With national standards in place, quality was more closely scrutinised. The registration process and auditing to maintain standards required schools to prove compliance to another government body. This added to the administrative load of schools, which may have been perceived as detracting from the ‘core business’ of providing education, and may have caused schools to question the value of VETiS given the administrative burden involved. This issue may also negatively influence the attitudes of school staff towards the teaching of VETiS subjects and decrease the motivation of such staff to promote VETiS subjects to their students.

Current practice and policy promote VETiS training within the school environment in order to encourage students to stay at school, resulting in reduced numbers of students enrolling full-time at TAFE. Research by Polesel, Helme, Davies, Teese, Nicholas & Vickers (2004b) found that the TAFE sector has raised concerns as to the quality of VETiS, and that the choices made by schools on which VETiS subjects to deliver reflected the availability of resources and not necessarily student needs/interests. The historical perspective of placing vocational education outside the school sector could have implications for stakeholders’ perceptions of the quality or suitability of VETiS in secondary schools.

2.4.1.2 Funding, policy and legislative influence

Government initiatives including policy, funding and legislation have aimed to support VETiS implementation. There appears to have been a constant stream of support offered to NSW schools to promote the implementation of VETiS.

From 1997–2000 the Australian federal government committed $20 million annually to implement this national framework in order to develop prescribed forms of VETiS
in secondary schools (Malley & Keating, 2000). As school systems and individual schools received this funding they moved away from the relative freedom of the Australian Vocational Certificate Training System (AVCTS) and early Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) funds which had been provided from 1992 to 1996. The next step in the acceptance of the national vocational education model by schools was the state and territory school boards meeting with the National Training Framework Committee of ANTA to consider ways of incorporating NTF requirements into the senior secondary certificate. This was formally implemented in 1998 when the Ministers of Education declared that “Boards of Studies, in agreement with state/territory recognition authorities, will recognise as VETiS only that which delivers national industry and/or enterprise competency standards” (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, 1998, p. 35).

A white paper by the NSW government in 1997, *Securing Their Future*, in response to the McGaw Report (1996), led to a major reform of the Higher School Certificate in 2000. This paper reviewed all courses included in the HSC to ensure they were appropriately challenging, based on contemporary knowledge and that they helped shape career pathways. *Securing Their Future* found that VETiS studies in the HSC were neither sufficiently rigorous in order to earn industry and university respect, nor did they have clear pathways for further education and training (Aquilina, 1997). It was also found that there was overwhelming support for strengthening and extending VETiS through the HSC. The NSW government then outlined principles to be implemented within the HSC, which included that VETiS should have links to further education and employment and be recognised by accreditation authorities (both secondary and VETiS). The government also pledged support to expand the range of VETiS courses which could be counted towards tertiary entrance. Endorsing the incorporation of key work-related competencies (replacing the Mayer key competencies) was integral to the application of knowledge, understanding and skill development.

VETiS programs were further supported by a series of goals set out in the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* as stated by MCEETYA (1999). This Declaration superseded the Hobart Declaration of 1989 which established a commitment by all states and territories to improving Australian schooling through a national collaborative framework (Australian Education Council,
The Adelaide Declaration contained a range of references to VETiS. Goal 3.6 stated that "all students should have access to the high quality education necessary to enable completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training" (p. 3). The Declaration also emphasised the importance of linkages between vocational education, careers, enterprise education and the key competencies (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1999).

MCEETYA, while responding to these national goals, proposed a new framework for VETiS emphasising greater support for young people in the transition from school to employment and further education (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2001). The new framework for VETiS provided policy directions to guide key stakeholders in transition pathways for students. In support, the federal government continued to provide approximately $20 million between 2001 and 2004 (in addition to the similar amount provided from 1997 to 2001) to complement state funding to support the expansion of VETiS (Karmel, 2007).

The Australian Recognition Framework (ARF) which commenced operating in 1998 to promote a nationally-consistent VETiS system was reviewed and replaced with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) in 2002. The AQTF was designed to clearly specify the requirements of RTOs, improve auditing arrangements and to introduce standards and agreed processes for state and territory accreditation bodies (KPA Consulting (Australia), 2004). The strict guidelines of the AQTF and the auditing required both internally and externally is important to this research as requirements were made of schools in addition to NESA requirements (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2018). This compliance issue is of significance to this research and may contribute to school decisions about VETiS implementation as well as give insights to the reasons behind stakeholder views on VETiS.

VETiS incorporated the workplace learning concepts of the ASTF as well as classroom and simulated instruction for workplace learning. VETiS was to provide training that would lead to a vocational qualification under the AQF. Both VETiS and SBATs were able then to contribute towards a leaving certificate at the completion of Year 12 studies. The NTF model gradually became accepted by schools, although
initially it was often implemented in addition to the existing curriculum offerings. Due to the work placement requirements and subsequent related costs, a common perception was that VETiS was more expensive to run than standard academic courses. From 1996 to 2000 one of the main concerns affecting VETiS was funding for sustainability and growth (Malley & Keating, 2000).

Between 1999 and 2003 the federal government committed further funds to provide capital infrastructure grants to establish training facilities for industry skills centres in schools (NSW Department of Education and Training & NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training, 2008). In 2004 the federal government announced another $1 billion of new initiatives for the provision of skills in traditional trade areas. These funds became available to schools as a result of government incentives to encourage schools to implement and expand VETiS. The issue of resourcing impacts on implementation and uptake of VETiS, and is an important element of this research.

State, territory and federal Ministers for Education met in 2008 in Melbourne, and acknowledged the commitment to education standards of the Hobart and Adelaide Declarations. They then committed to continuing to develop Australia’s education system through the 2008 Melbourne Declaration. The Melbourne Declaration placed emphasis on two goals, both of which support VETiS: that schooling promotes equity and excellence and that all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens (Ministerial Council on Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs, 2008).

In 2009 MCEETYA published a four-year plan in response to the Melbourne Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2009). This plan proposed nine key strategies, the focus of which was to achieve the goals set out by the Melbourne Declaration and which also targeted increased participation in VETiS. Additionally, in 2008 the federal government announced funding to build Trade Training Centres (TTCs) in schools to enhance vocational education. This funding committed $2.5 billion over a ten-year period to enable all secondary schools to build TTCs or improve existing facilities in order to deliver VETiS in skills shortage areas to higher AQF qualifications (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010c).
In accordance with the 2009 COAG agreement, the National Youth Participation Requirement came into effect in January 2010, requiring all states to change the school leaving age to seventeen. From 1943 to 2009 it was compulsory for students to stay in school till the age of fifteen. Research identified that students who completed a senior secondary certificate of education (or equivalent) were more likely to have a successful transition to further education, training and work than early school leavers. This change subsequently altered the population of secondary schools. Students who would have previously left school early were remaining in school. “Forty percent of secondary students go directly on to university; sixty percent do not”, therefore schooling was required to meet the needs of all of these students so that they could successfully transition into employment, education or training (Education Council, 2014, p. 2). This is important to this research as a potential influence in the implementation and uptake of VETiS.

The COAG agreement also required the formation of a national regulator for the VETiS sector, replacing the previous state and territory registering bodies. All jurisdictions agreed to be a part of the national regulator, except for Western Australia and Victoria (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010b). The AQTF which was initially established in 2002 has been under continual review for improvements and has had revisions in 2005, 2007 and in 2010 (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010a) aimed at further supporting a national approach to VETiS. Subsequently, the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 was implemented (“National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011,” Aus). The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) was then established to increase consistency across states and territories and to address quality concerns as the national VET regulator (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2011). The national regulator meant that education systems no longer worked with their state regulator. The previous support provided by the state regulator was not available under the national regulator, consequently greater demands were put on school RTOs and their teachers. In 2011 the AQTF standards were replaced by the Standards for Registered Training Organisations; these were also reviewed and replaced in 2012 and 2015 (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015) This is important to this research as it provides information about the continual changes experienced by VET which may give insight into the variations in implementation of VETiS.
Currently all Australian states and territories offer VETiS in Years 11 and 12. VETiS can be counted towards the senior secondary certificate in all states and territories and increasingly VETiS can be counted towards university entrance (Education Council, 2014). Incorporation of VET into senior secondary certificates continues to remain a work in progress in all Australian states (Centre for International Research on Education Systems & Victoria University, 2014). In 2014, a national VET framework was released to guide further efforts in this area entitled, *Preparing secondary students for work: A framework for vocational learning and VET delivered to secondary students* (Education Council, 2014).

In conclusion, the literature suggests that the journey of VETiS has been influenced by both industry and educational policy. Indeed, VET lies within both domains. Changes in government strategies have seen VET be included in the portfolio of various government departments. There have also been changes in the names of the departments governing this area.

### 2.4.1.3 Other systemic or external policy issues

Other issues including systemic and policy changes have also influenced the implementation of VETiS. Individual states in Australia regulate their own systems of education (Polesel, 2008); however upper secondary schooling generally follows a comprehensive provision model, offering a general, non-differentiated path towards a single exit point at the end of Year 12. State governments retain control of curriculum, assessment and financing of schools and there is substantial variation among the states in school practices and policies (Cooney & Long, 2010).

Although traditionally the Australian government has played a relatively minor role in the school education sector, it has implemented initiatives focused on the vocational aspects of senior secondary schooling. The Australian government has provided targeted funding specifically for the purpose of increasing VETiS opportunities (Cooney & Long, 2010). Government policy and guidelines have also influenced policy changes in the Catholic sector.
In *Catholic Schools at a Crossroad* (2007), a strategic directions document for NSW Catholic schools, the Bishops of NSW and the ACT emphasised that school leaders need to consider the changing composition and role of the Catholic school. The Catholic Education Commission (CEC) submitted a report for the inquiry into VET in NSW which was conducted by the legislative council. In this submission it was stated that VETiS supports the aims of the Bishops by addressing the educational needs of a diversity of students (Catholic Education Commission, 2015).

In Australia, a review of VETiS is being conducted by the Federal Assistant Minister Sussan Ley with a view to developing a new national statement, the findings of which are not yet released. The present national statement on VETiS is from 2001 (Clarke, 2015). In this statement VETiS is seen as a mechanism for “enhancing [student] transition to a range of post-school options and pathways” (p. 44). Furthermore Clarke argued that:

> VET in Schools occupies different spaces within the architecture of each senior secondary certificate (e.g. VCE, HSC, QCE, SACE, and WACE). There appears to a consensus that VET in Schools is a core part of a modern senior secondary curriculum. Despite this in principle support for VET in Schools, teachers, providers, policy makers and other stakeholders have expressed concerns about the existing models of VET in Schools delivery. (p. 44)

Like the words of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus (535BC–475BC), the only thing (in VETiS) that is constant is change (Kirk, 1954). Changes in political directives, legislation, education policies and societal trends have implications for the boundaries in which schools deliver education. School leadership juggle these together with resourcing, budgetary considerations and human factors while endeavouring to meet school community expectations. This is important to this research as it may reveal the barriers and enablers which influence the implementation and uptake of VETiS.

2.4.2 Resourcing

This section considers resourcing as an influence in the implementation of VETiS. Resourcing VETiS requires adequate industry-standard equipment and suitably qualified teacher/trainers. To be able to deliver VETiS schools must work under a RTO and comply with the VET standards. The *Standards for Registered Training*
Organisations (RTOs) 2015 require training and assessment to be delivered by persons who have the vocational competencies to the level being delivered/assessed, as well as current skills and knowledge (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015). The standards state that training facilities must include learning resources and be able to accommodate the learners for each training package qualification the RTO has within the scope of registration.

Training package qualifications are occupational skills standards against which training delivery and assessment can take place (Department of Education and Training, 2017). Training packages specify the content and requirements for delivery and assessment for every vocational competency included in each qualification. Among the assessment requirements are industry-standard equipment.

The continued registration of an RTO is dependent upon compliance with the standards for RTOs measured against the training qualifications listed within the individual scope of the RTO. This requirement has direct implications for school implementation of VETiS in terms of personnel and other resource requirements.

Research undertaken by Polesel (2008) concluded that additional levels of funding are required for VETiS in order to avoid this area becoming diluted and marginalised. His research found that many teachers regard VETiS as generating extra costs for both the school and students in terms of materials and transport.

School leadership face significant resourcing challenges in the implementation of VETiS. Human resource issues include the large administrative load, timetabling issues and budgetary consequences (Klatt et al., 2016). Research undertaken by Harreveld (2015), which involved a cross-case analysis over thirteen sites, identified that the resourcing implications related to continual changes required for compliance are a barrier to VETiS implementation. Changes in training packages require staff to maintain currency and schools to maintain industry-standard resources, both of which impose additional costs on schools. Harreveld (2015) also found that the cost of VETiS can lead to resentment and negative perceptions about VETiS among staff.

Australian schools currently receive government funding to support VETiS and this funding is distributed on a per capita basis related to Stage 6 enrolments (Australian
Education Act 2013, Aus). This means that schools with high enrolments in Stage 6 receive the most funding—whether they deliver VETiS or not. This potentially constitutes an equity issue as many of the schools with high Stage 6 enrolments come from the independent sector where in many instances the emphasis placed on educational culture is more academically-oriented. There is also a concern for the issue of ongoing funding for VETiS which is uncertain and is annually-based (personal communication, P Rodney, VETiS State Manager, Catholic Education Commission, May 2009).

Maintaining compliance with the RTO standard presents a challenge involving significant effort and expense (Centre for International Research on Education Systems & Victoria University, 2014). The costs associated with VETiS include the resourcing required for program coordination, teacher training/currency and industry-standard resources for training. Frost (2010) has highlighted the importance of sustained funding to ensure certainty in implementing VETiS:

Resourcing of VETiS programs is critically linked to sustainability. The single biggest issue is long-term uncertainty about the place for VETiS in the education and training field with constant challenges around staffing turnover as well as ongoing operational costs of renewal making the climate in which they operate challenging. (p. 9)

In a report to the Australian Government’s Department of Education, Science and Training, the lack of resources was reported as a key finding which impacted on schools’ ability to offer VETiS and also the number and nature of VETiS courses delivered (Alloway, Dalley, Patterson, Walker, & Lenoy, 2004). A key limitation to the VETiS courses undertaken by students is the cost of continual compliance-driven change (B. Harreveld, 2015). A study undertaken in the United Kingdom reinforces the position that resource availability significantly affects a school's capacity to meet the needs of its students in relation to subject offerings and that this is a global issue (Foskett, Dyke, & Maringe, 2008). Foskett et al.’s (2008) study further highlights that schools in areas of low socio-economic status had poorer resources and facilities than their more wealthy counterparts. Although schools are aware of the need to deliver a wider curriculum to provide for the diversity of learner needs and expectations, they are constrained by considerations such as resource availability, expertise of teachers and travel logistics.
VETiS delivery typically reflects school-based subject delivery taught in a standard school environment due to the considerable and potentially risky investment in school resources (Ryan, 2002). Research by Malley, Keating, Robinson and Hawke (2002) further identifies that “over 60% of VETiS delivery in schools is in areas of traditional subject selection rebadged under VETiS delivery”—such as information technology, hospitality and business studies (p. 110). VETiS subjects implemented are those which tend to fit more readily into the school curriculum (Karmel, 2008).

Ryan (2002) concludes that there are too many VETiS programs in schools driven by educators and politicians in the quest to be seen to be “doing something” about increasing the connection between education and employment (p. 11). According to Ryan insufficient consideration was given within the senior secondary curriculum to VETiS to enable these subjects to be recognised as qualifications of high value serving “multiple purposes and users, including university entrance” (Ryan, 2002).

Dalton and Smith’s (2004) research, involving thirteen interviews with VETiS teachers and coordinators in eight Australian secondary schools, highlights the issue of VETiS being costly to deliver and that schools receive little extra funding to implement it. VETiS remains separate from other vocational subjects taught in school such as agriculture, technical studies, food technology and business studies. Funding issues surrounding VETiS may be a contributor to this separation and to the lack of schools embracing of VETiS as a mainstream subject, according to Dalton and Smith. Klatt et al.’s (2016) research, conducted by a survey of secondary schools in Victoria, SA and NSW conducting VETiS together with thirty interviews with teachers/principals/ coordinators and thirty focus groups with students, identified that limited financial and human resources were highly significant barriers to VETiS implementation.

Student engagement in learning has been shown to be higher when schools had access to a wider range of resources which provided more student choice (Fullarton, 2002). Fullarton’s research, involving longitudinal surveys of Australian youth, raised the issue of equity noting that schools which were financially able to provide resources often had a parent community that had the financial resources to support wider choices. Malley et al.’s (2001) research further posited that, while VETiS funding is based on Stage 6 enrolments, equitable opportunities in school subject choices may be threatened and students from regional and country schools may be
disadvantaged due to smaller enrolments. Given that the Catholic schools in this study are rurally-located, with some of the schools categorised as remote, this issue is of particular interest in this research.

This section has highlighted the cost of resourcing as a potential contributor to VETiS implementation in Australia; the present research aims to explore what local resourcing issues may contribute to the implementation of VETiS.

2.4.3 Cost of external provision

Another influence on the implementation of VETiS is the cost of external provisioning. In the study undertaken by Dalton and Smith (2004), they reported that schools differ in their mode of delivery of VETiS programs. Delivery may be internal (delivered on-site by the school or system RTO), or external (delivered off-site or on-site by an external RTO). The reasons for engaging an external RTO include the lack of school capacity to deliver the program internally due to lack of physical or human resources, or the desire to expand subject opportunities for students. Schools vary in their ability to access VETiS delivered by external providers such as TAFE, with the most obvious obstacles being costs, including the cost of travel. External providers of VETiS are commercial for-profit businesses and must recover costs involved in the delivery of VETiS, which means the charging of fees for VETiS courses to school students (Polesel et al., 2004b). Therefore, external delivery of VETiS has additional cost implications for schools.

Currie and McCollow (2002), conducted research which was commissioned by the Australian Education Union and involved a review of policy and literature, and interviews with teachers, school administrators and relevant personnel in various state/territory departments of education. They found that fees charged by TAFE institutes on a cost recovery basis were often higher than private providers due to higher overheads and that this caused resentment from schools. They also found that enrolments through TAFE sometimes affected the viability of school subject selections. For example, three students undertaking an externally-delivered course means three students less in another subject which may affect that subject’s ability to be offered (p. 124). Polesel et al. (2004b) found that the necessity to pay additional fees could be a key barrier to some students’ participation in VETiS courses. Burke,
Underwood and Beavis (2004) noted that the fees charged to schools for the same externally-provided VETiS courses vary substantially.

Burke et al. (2004) also found that students who left school and enrolled in TAFE in general paid much less than they would by doing the same course through VETiS. Fees charged to non-school students were about a half to a third of the fee imposed for VETiS. Non-school students were exempt from fees altogether if they held a health care card (which is a government issued card for those on pensions or low income subsidies) or were in receipt of the youth allowance. This is important to this research as it may provide insight into the variation between schools in the uptake of VETiS and/or TVET.

To pay for external provision of VETiS, Catholic schools access a share of NSW externally-delivered HSC TVET funding, which meets approximately 70% of the costs incurred (Catholic Education Commission, 2015). Some Catholic schools charge additional costs to cover the shortfall costs of externally-delivered VETiS courses, which is in addition to the students’ existing school fees (personal communication, P Rodney, VETiS State Manager, Catholic Education Commission, May 2009). Polesel et al. (2004b) noted that some schools pay for externally-delivered VETiS courses through the global budget. Other schools 'shop around' to find a provider who is willing to negotiate a more acceptable price and conditions (p. 39). Government schools in NSW avoid the problem of fees as enrolments in TAFE reduce the pro rata school staffing funding because they belong to the same government department; this is not necessarily the case in other states of Australia. This in turn encourages schools to deliver internally instead of sending students externally to TAFE (Burke et al., 2004).

In conclusion, the evidence presented in this section demonstrates that cost is a barrier to VETiS students studying through an external provider such as TAFE. Additionally, there is evidence of inequity in fees charged to school and non-school students studying the same courses. This is relevant to this research as it aims to identify reasons for variation in uptake of VETiS including courses which are delivered externally.
2.4.4 School and community expectations

The policy document *Preparing secondary students for work: A framework for vocational learning and VET delivered to secondary students* emphasises that meeting the needs of the broader community, including employers, is vital for the successful implementation (Education Council, 2014):

The interests of students and employers are best met by involving and taking account of the needs of all those who influence and deliver vocational learning and VET, including parents, schools, school systems, training package developers, RTOs and VET regulators. (p. 1)

This document establishes a vision that all stakeholders can support, which states:

All secondary students experience quality vocational learning and have access to quality VET courses.
Both vocational learning and VET are seamlessly integrated into secondary schooling and valued by students, parents, teachers and employers.

(p. 4)

The Education Council emphasises that global competition, changes in technology, increasing user demands and a shift towards a knowledge-based economy require ongoing change in schooling to meet the needs of employers and to equip workers with the skills they require in the twenty-first century. Students, and their families, have expectations that the qualifications and vocational skills attained at school will provide building blocks for successful transition into sustainable employment and further education (Clarke, 2015).

The functional operations of schools reflect the culture and discourses of VETiS practice within each school (Green, Brennan Kemmis, Choy, & Henning Loeb, 2017). Successful implementation of VETiS is often reliant upon the support of school leadership in promoting VETiS within the broader educational goals for the school and in fostering a program that is developed locally in response to local conditions and needs (Country Education Project (Inc), 1999). A key step in enhancing the effectiveness of VETiS is the early exposure and embedding of VETiS in the core business and culture of schools (Clarke, 2012). Clarke’s research involved four case studies of schools delivering VETiS. She found that a consistent approach with a
clear purpose and role for VETiS is required to improve post-school transition for young people into further education and employment.

A study undertaken by Stokes, Stacey and Lake (2006) reinforces that the success of VETiS can be dependent on community partnerships. This study used case studies from seven rural and regional areas. It was found that partnerships, in order to be successful, must have the capacity to analyse and respond to community issues, harness community resilience (through a ‘can do’ attitude), and connect the delivery with shared community values and the development of a shared purpose. This study further found that the school–VETiS partnership can contribute in a positive way by keeping students engaged in school, as work placements in the community can reinforce student understanding of the purpose and relevance of schooling. This study found that the partnerships developed by school and VETiS further added to the building of community capacity by providing students with the networks and skills to find employment locally, thus keeping young people within the community. Another added benefit was a contribution through these partnerships in increasing the credibility of the school system within local businesses.

Social partnerships between community, government and schools has been shown to provide learning opportunities outside traditional delivery and to target “at risk” individuals not participating in traditional learning (Seddon & Billett, 2004, p. 4). According to Seddon and Billet, these social partnerships also provide expanded opportunities to address local problems. Problems identified, such as unemployment, community breakdown and social exclusion, suggested that partnerships can target local problems by addressing local concerns and needs. Communities were found to benefit by establishing a positive attitude to lifelong learning through VETiS. Communities were also found to benefit by contributing to community sustainability, by providing young people with resilience in times of rapid social and economic change, which in turn aids in the provision of a more secure and independent future for youth.

In the Education Council policy Preparing secondary students for work: A framework for vocational learning and VET delivered to secondary students, collaboration in VETiS was seen as pivotal to linking skills with local employment, encouraging learning and strengthening VETiS providers’ partnerships with industry, employers
and other agencies (Education Council, 2014). VETiS, it has been argued, can contribute to the sustainability of communities by being a critical entry point to learning and a builder of social and other capital within communities (Allison, Gorringe, & Lacey, 2006). This study by Allison et al. found that VETiS—and the partnerships involving VETiS—can add to individual and community confidence being the pathway to employment and further learning. It was also found that VETiS partnerships can further contribute by facilitating and developing ‘social capital’ i.e. “the network of relationships within a society that build on trust, reciprocity, and reciprocity and which can improve the efficiency of society by aiding coordinated action” (p. 5). Allison et al. reflects on the concept of a learning community which involves “people and institutions with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective regional development in a knowledge economy and learning society” (p. 5). Allison et al.’s research suggests that VETiS and VETiS partnerships can also play a critical role in regional development.

Seddon et al.’s (2008) study found that that funding, and cessation of funding, has an impact on partnership development between schools and industry. Their study reinforced the position that, while social partnerships make an important contribution to VETiS, they also can be fragile. The authors found that ongoing sustainability of partnerships recognises that while goodwill and commitment are paramount they cannot replace realistic funding of reasonable duration, appropriate available skilled personnel, authority to delegate through government endorsement and a democratic foundation giving legitimacy to partnerships. Funding support for partnerships assist the links between school and industry; without this funding schools and industry must invest their own resources which imposes cost implications on the core business of their operations.

In 2009, a government program linking industry with schools and known as Local Community Partnerships was disbanded, as was Career Advice Australia. These were replaced by School Community Business Partnership Brokers and Youth Connections (Department of Education and Training, 2009). These programs endeavoured to support schools, businesses and communities through forming strategic partnerships, and supporting youth at risk. Partnership broker funding ended in 2014, raising concerns that youth would be disadvantaged through lack of support when preparing for post-school transition (Barrett, 2014).
This need for community partnerships is not only confined to Australia. Studies undertaken in the United States of America by Lynch (2000) at the University of Georgia indicate that effective high schools seem to be highly responsive to the community and highly responsive to students’ individual development. The common denominators of outstanding high schools identified in this research were the importance of meaningful partnerships with parents, local or area colleges (including community and technical colleges), industry and business, social services, policy makers and community groups. This study also reflected on the school’s community and the essential role of administrators and teachers in providing a team approach to meeting individual students’ learning needs through integration of career-oriented studies.

This analysis supports the investigation of community involvement in schools in relation to VETiS and the belief that partnership arrangements may influence successful implementation.

2.4.5 School and system leadership

This section includes discussion of studies that examine the influence of leadership on the implementation of vocational education.

For leadership to be effective in the implementation of VETiS it is neither the province of a solitary leader nor is it restricted to a leadership style (Falk, 2003, p. 197). Leadership requires an intervention that is purposefully designed to fulfil a perceived need. Falk talks of effective leadership in VETiS needing to be “enabling leadership”, which is a process of enabling interactions between internal, external and individual areas of activity. Social capital refers to the “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation between groups” (Cote & Healy, 2001, p. 41). Effective leadership in VETiS is an important consideration requiring leadership to be enabling in order to build social capital through purposeful networks.

According to Barnett and Ryan (2005) schools and state systems persist with VETiS programs because of their politically appealing nature and due to the real benefits to
students. They emphasise that for sustainability and development of VETiS programs, policy makers need to respond with adequate administrative and resource support. A cross-case analysis of thirteen Australian schools by Harreveld (2015) highlighted that leadership can promote successful VETiS implementation by allowing VETiS to be adequately resourced, timetabled and built in as a curriculum priority.

Several studies have explored how the curriculum has provided opportunities for vocational education. These include Australian case studies Klatt et al. (2016), Harreveld (2015), Clayton, Lewanski, Pancini and Schutt (2011) and Schneyder (2002). Research undertaken by Klatt et al. (2016) identified that in schools where leadership was seen not to be providing sufficient support for VETiS, teachers were dissatisfied due to lack of time allocation, resources, knowledge and support. This finding supports Harreveld’s (2015) research which emphasised that advocacy by leadership is paramount for the successful implementation of VETiS. Leadership support through providing flexible timetabling and class duration are important for student engagement in VETiS programs (Clayton, Lewanski, Pancini, & Schutt, 2010). The curriculum can be structured to prioritise or at least give credible attention to VETiS through adequate resourcing and consideration of the time requirements for effective assessment and learning (B. Harreveld, 2015).

In her reflection on her experiences as a principal, Schneyder (2002) emphasised that changes in secondary schools designed to ensure the needs of all students are being met (such as the incorporation of VETiS), will be more likely to be successful and sustainable if supported with resourcing and the commitment of the school principal. The areas that were found to be conducive to successful change were curriculum development, curriculum management (timetabling), personnel management, strength of community partnership and strategies for school promotion. Schneyder also posited that the schools which indicated successful implementation of VETiS were those whose principals were very clear about the reasons for its implementation. These reasons included enabling successful transition from school to post-school, addressing the diverse needs the student population, providing a breadth of experience in learning, increasing enrolments/retention, challenging traditional beliefs of staff/parents about education and establishing links between the school and the community. All of these factors have the potential to enhance or
hinder effective implementation and enrolment of students into VETiS subjects and this will be a focus of the present research. These findings highlight the need to further explore the experience of school principals in the implementation of VETiS.

This analysis considered the role of system and school leadership in relation to the implementation of VETiS and confirms the need for the present research to consider the leadership perspective in its analysis.

2.4.6 Summary of school implementation of VETiS literature review

The review has revealed that there are a variety of influences that affect a school’s decision to offer a particular course of study. Policies dictated by government influence school education directions. Resource availability and access affect schools’ ability to offer certain subjects. The cost of VETiS delivery is a significant consideration. Research has revealed that partnerships are an essential contributor to successful VETiS implementation. School and system leadership provide direction for school delivery and as such can be seen to be enabling or hindering the implementation of VETiS.

2.5 Student uptake of VETiS

Part of the rationale for this research is the lack of understanding as to the influences which impact student subject choice in relation to VETiS. This research does not separate genders as the preamble reflection was of overall participation rates. This was due to there being no significant difference in that data between overall participation in VETiS between girls or boys. However, within the different VETiS courses it was apparent that some courses appealed more to boys than girls, and vice versa. This research was not a gender study but a study of schools regarding participation in and implementation of VETiS courses.

Bronfenbrenner’s model acknowledges that an individual is influenced by a range of connecting external influences when making decisions. This model is suited to this research as it can be “mapped onto the research process representing all three research traditions, namely, qualitative, quantitative and mixed research, and is applicable across the social, behavioural and health fields (Onwuegbuzie, Collins, &
Frels, 2013, p. 5). Figure 2-5 shows the connective influences of Bronfenbrenner’s model. Bronfenbrenner believed that decisions were affected by the individual’s surrounding environment.

Figure 2-5 Bronfenbrenner's biological model of human development

This study was informed by Bronfenbrenner’s model (2005) to structure the literature review. The literature review was organised around five influences which are predominantly microsystem level impacts:

- Parent expectations;
- School personnel, peer and employer influence;
- School culture;
- Parity of esteem; and
- Career aspirations.

Figure 2-6 outlines some of the empirical research and literature relating to these five influences. In the next five subsections, this research and literature will be explored further with the intention of identifying key areas on which to focus the research. In Section 2.5.1 the influence of parents and their expectations on decision-making by students is examined. The influence of other stakeholders including school personnel, peers and employers is explored in Section 2.5.2. How VETiS subjects fit
within the school culture and subject choice is considered in Section 2.5.3. Parity of VETiS subjects within the curriculum is explored in Section 2.5.4. In Section 2.5.5 the influence of career aspirations and subject choice in relation to VETiS choice is examined.

![Diagram of School Implementation of VETiS](image.png)

**Figure 2-6 Literature review map, student uptake of VETiS**

### 2.5.1 Parent expectations

Parent expectations are influenced by a range of factors which are considered in this section. These include knowledge of options, expectations for their children and social positioning. A study funded by the Department of Education, Science and
Training (DEST) was undertaken by Alloway et al. (2004) which investigated education and career decisions in relation to VETiS. Parents were found to play an important role in student decision-making in relation to subject choice and it was suggested that parental influence may put students under considerable pressure (Alloway et al., 2004).

According to Clayton et al. (2010), many parents lack awareness or understanding of the options and possibilities that vocational education and training offer. This study involved case studies of nine schools in three Australian states, as well as focus groups and interviews with students, parents, staff and school leadership. Their findings emphasised the importance of highlighting the positive outcomes of VETiS programs to parents, such as the role of VETiS as a viable pathway to work, training and further education (Clayton et al., 2010).

Alloway et al. (2004), in their study of students, career advisers and principals in nine schools across Australia, identified that parent expectation, desires and hopes for their child’s future may reflect the choices encouraged. They found that parents have their own expectations of future education and employment for their child, and many parents advocate for a university pathway. A paper written by Dalley-Trim, Alloway and Walker (2008), reflecting on the work of Alloway et al. (2004), identified that the status of VETiS may reflect negative perceptions about VETiS students and “which type of student was suited for—and subsequently enrolled in —VET” (p. 65). This devaluing of VETiS and VETiS students potentially results in family pressure not to be involved or associate with VETiS students (p. 66).

Additionally, the large-scale quantitative study by Sciarra and Ambrosino (2011) in the United States, using information from 5,353 students, teachers, and parents who participated in the 2002–2006 Educational Longitudinal Study, confirm the proposition that the expectations of parents have a central place in predicting the educational outcomes of their children. Research by Polidano and Tabasso (2016) in the Australian context has further identified that parent education and occupational preferences influence the academic performance and occupational preferences of their child. Their study was funded by the Australian Government Department of Industry and managed by NCVER using administrative data, propensity score matching and a decomposition method. Data were made available from the Victorian
Department of Education and Training, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre.

A study undertaken by Connell (2004) gained insight into the views of working class parents on VETiS courses. This study involved eight government secondary schools in NSW chosen to reflect the diversity of schools and communities in the public education system. Connell found that working class parents were generally not in a strong position to provide advice about education choice due to limited experience of post-school education. Working class parents generally viewed VETiS courses favourably, commending the practical skills and the potential for employment. This holds significance for this research regarding advice given by parents in relation to VETiS subjects and the motivations for such advice.

Research undertaken by Alloway et al. (2004) was commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training to investigate how school students make education and career decisions. This study considered the views of parents in relation to VETiS and found that there was a valuing of different pathways for different students although VETiS was held in a positive light. Generally parents shared the views of career advisers and students that VETiS was for the non-academically oriented student. This study also found that parents had concerns regarding specialising in one vocational area too soon which impacted on the overall options students had available to them when transitioning from school to work and further education.

A report commissioned by the Directorate-General Education and Culture of the European Commission examined attitudes to Vocational Education and Training in the European Union (EU). The report was based on interviews of 26,840 European citizens aged 15 and above to elicit their perspectives on VET. This study identified that the most common sources of subject advice for EU respondents were parents or another family member (TNS Opinion and Social. Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011).

Parent advice can be driven by the belief that higher education can lead to higher pay and greater security—which is not necessarily the case (Montague, 2001). Many parents do not have a full understanding of the pathways available to students from a VETiS course, which can include certificate courses, diplomas, degrees and beyond.
As parents are generally deeply concerned with their children’s successful transition from education to work, they base their advice on their existing knowledge and experience of what strategies are required to gain job security and well-paying employment. Parental pressure can therefore colour decisions on subject choice. This pressure could be an attempt to encourage aspiration to higher education, which is not necessarily reflective of the students’ academic orientation.

This analysis invites exploration into parental perceptions of the senior secondary certificate and their role in guiding their child through the subject selection process.

2.5.2 School personnel, peer and employer influence

Research suggests that other stakeholders such as school personnel, peers and employers may influence students when deciding on their education choices (Dalley-Trim et al., 2008). Students obtain and use information on subject selection from a variety of stakeholders and sources, according to research by Warton (1997a). He conducted a study of 1,048 students in ten co-educational government schools in Australia, and found that primary sources of information included advice from parents and teachers, career advisers and friends. A small percentage of students sought information from other sources such as potential employers, work experience hosts and other schools—these students rated such sources more highly for usefulness than other sources. The next most highly-rated stakeholder advice for usefulness according to all students interviewed was the advice given by career advisers and teachers.

The EU study mentioned previously confirmed that students gained advice about which subject to choose from a variety of stakeholders. It identified that 41% of subject selection advice was provided by parents or a family member; 28% of subject advice was given by teachers. Interestingly, 20% of subject advice was given by someone by current or prospective employers. Furthermore, friends and peers gave 19% and career guidance counsellors provided 14% of subject selection advice (TNS Opinion and Social. Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011). The adviser, the type of advice provided and the motivations behind advice given in relation to VETiS are of interest to this research.
Stakeholders are those who have a considered interest in the decisions made by students such as school management, subject advisers, careers advisers, teachers, peers and employers. Clayton et al. (2010) identified a major barrier to successful implementation as the limited status of Vocational Education and Training in the eyes of some career advisers and school teachers.

**School management:** School management promotes a vision and desired culture for their school, and make decisions on which subjects to promote (or not) as previously discussed in Sections 2.4.4 and 2.4.5. School management may influence students by making subjects more (or less) visible in subject information processes or emphasising the disadvantages of choosing a VETiS. The common disadvantages espoused by school management include the negative impact on other subjects through absences caused by VETiS activities. Other disadvantages which may be emphasised include the inability or lowered ability of VETiS subjects to contribute towards university admission, and the negative perception of VETiS subjects and VETiS students prevalent in the community (Dalley-Trim et al., 2008).

**Teachers:** Teachers are significant stakeholders in influencing subject selection by students. The expectations of teachers can have wide-ranging influences on student achievement and educational attainment: “Teacher expectations influence not only academic performance but also long-term educational goals” (Sciarra & Ambrosino, 2011, p. 232). Teachers provide advice to students on the merits of differing study pathways, either directly through conversations or indirectly by attitudes to courses of study. According to Polesel et al. (2004b) there is still resistance among some teachers in relation to the delivery of VETiS. There is an opinion by some teachers of more academic subject areas that VETiS is disruptive to the delivery of other subjects, that it is difficult to accommodate in the timetable and is unnecessary. However, the majority of teachers in Polesel’s study believe that VETiS is a valuable addition to the curriculum offerings within a school and can help to manage the diverse needs of students, improve educational outcomes and provide for learning preferences of students. Teachers of non-VETiS subjects are often very positive about VETiS for non-academically successful students and see it as a way of managing these students, whereas VETiS teachers are positive about VETiS for all students regardless of academic ability (Polesel et al., 2004b).
Subjects require sufficient student numbers in order to be viable for the school; in some cases teachers may actively recruit students to ensure their subject is offered (Foskett et al., 2008). Advice from teachers may also be motivated by their own teaching reputation for academic outcomes and their desire to encourage more academic students into their classes (and remove students who make teaching difficult) (Dalley-Trim et al., 2008). Individual teachers may also have a vested interest in student selection of subjects that they prefer to teach. Teachers may perceive that VETiS is for a particular type of student, and students may be allocated to a particular stream within the curriculum as a result of misconceptions about student’s abilities and educational aspirations (Clarke, 2015).

**Career Advisers:** Guidance on subject selection may come from the career adviser within a school. The type of career advice varies between schools and influences the information given to students in relation to subject selection (Alloway et al., 2004, p. vii). Career advisers tend to provide advice based on “what they perceive to be the students’ level of academic achievement” (Dalley-Trim, Alloway, Patterson, & Walker, 2007, p. 34). Career advisers tend to advise academic students to undertake VETiS in order to gain advantage over other academic students; for non-academic students, VETiS is seen as the only viable option. Practices for career advice in some schools have the potential to steer non-academic students into VETiS programs. Dalley-Trim et al. (2007) raised the concern that career advisers may contribute to the devaluing and marginalisation of VETiS programs. Research by Patton and Creed (2007), involving 925 students from two secondary schools, identified a disconnect between Australian policy and practice in relation to career advice, due to the lack of a comprehensive career program across the secondary system.

**Peers:** The need for social inclusion at school may also affect subject selection and students frequently take into consideration the intentions and choices of their friends and fellow students when making such selections (Brooks, 2003; Warton, 1997b). Students often position themselves among their peers and friends and this positioning impacts on subject selection and career aspirations. Students see themselves as more capable, equally capable or less capable than their peers and friends, and this can be reflected when making subject selections (Brooks, 2003). A more recent study by Naz, Saeed, Khan, Khan, Sheikh, & Khan (2014) involving 100 students, found that peers and friends are influential in students’ academic choices.
Their study found that peers influenced subject choices for 94% of students. Furthermore, the higher education aspirations of peers have been found to influence students’ own aspirations: “students whose friends plan to attend university are nearly four times more likely to plan to attend university” (Gemici, Bednarz, Karmel, & Lim, 2014, p. 17). Peer advice may be motivated by a personal need for companionship and social inclusion.

Community stakeholders: Employers and communities may contribute to subject choices and promotion of VETiS via work experience, careers days and social interaction (Porter, 2006). Students can see real examples of career pathways, employer needs and employability requirements via these methods. Students can also see firsthand that success takes various forms, and opportunities for careers can be sourced in many ways. Porter (2006) further found that communities value VETiS delivery in schools, that the community benefits from training students for the workplace and that there are economic/social benefits of working partnerships in the community. Of significance to this research is the influence of workplace experiences in relation to student subject choice, the potential for workplace supervisors to give advice and whether it is valued by students.

Community stakeholders raise concerns about the relevance, quality and employer engagement in VETiS programs. Some perceive that VETiS is inferior or different to other VET programs and that it is less valued by students and parents (Education Council, 2014). The present research examines the potential for student subject selection to be affected by various stakeholders, and identifies the motivations of these stakeholders in the context of VETiS programs.

2.5.3 School culture

The identity of a school is influenced by the culture, academic orientation, curriculum, and reputation established by the principal and teachers (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Petersen, 2011). School culture may be described as “the unwritten rules and traditions, customs and expectations” (Deal & Peterson, 2016, p. 7). It is grounded in the expectations of school management, governing body and community. It is the members of an organisation’s beliefs, actions and customs that develop the
distinguishable identity of that organisation, in other words the culture (Deal & Peterson, 2016).

Whetten (2006) considers school identity as those attributes of the organisation that distinguish it from others. It is those attributes that are of interest to this research in identifying why there is variation between schools in the uptake of VETiS. Gruenet and Whitaker (2015) also explored the impetus for school activities and processes, noting:

Why is it that some schools embrace new ideas, while others consider them distractions? Why do some teachers roll up their sleeves, while others simply roll their eyes? Often disparities within schools and districts are the results of separate cultures having been established over time. (p. 2)

Schools have distinctive identities and cultures which may influence decision-making by students. There are characteristics of a school’s organisation and structure that can promote or dampen an individual’s aspirations for further education and intentions. These characteristics may also influence decisions about attending such schools in the first place. A school’s emphasis on academic pathways and examination outcomes can reinforce parent and student ambitions and views (Foskett et al., 2008). Many schools have a predominantly academic orientation which results in a narrow definition of what counts for success and achievement (Hargreaves, Earl, & Ryan, 1996). According to McKenzie (2000), schools need to reconcile the differences between organisation and cultural goals and between traditional and vocational learning in order for VETiS to be effectively embedded in the curriculum offerings.

School culture may affect decisions relating to school structure and resourcing, potentially influencing the integration of VETiS into the school curriculum. School culture has the potential to value or undervalue VETiS and consequently to influence the status of VETiS at that school (Porter, 2006). The school ethos, school culture and school community can profoundly influence the choices and preferences which emerge in students (Foskett et al., 2008).

Schools develop their cultures over time and schools that promote a traditional culture and structure often have more difficulty in resourcing and providing the
flexibility to deliver VETiS (Porter, 2006). VETiS courses require teachers to undertake further studies in the industry areas being taught and in workplace assessment. Furthermore VETiS courses need to have industry-standard resources to ensure students are trained in industry environments (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015). These professional development and resource costs can be extensive, and, as schools have limited budgets for implementation decisions, management need to consider the school's culture and direction to decide where to commit financial resources. Another cultural issue relates to decisions regarding timetabling; for practical courses such as hospitality extended lessons are required. This has implications for teachers of non-VETiS subjects who may be allotted less time in the curriculum for the teaching of their subjects. Porter's research suggested that the school community was concerned by the disruption to other classes caused by VETiS students who were absent due to work placement. Another concern for the school community is the frequent absence of teachers as a result of needing to visit workplaces or maintain industry currency; this freedom is sometimes perceived negatively by school management and other teachers (Porter, 2006).

High school culture is largely characterised by departmentalisation and isolation making it difficult to bring about change (Hargreaves et al., 1996). Part of this difficulty can be due to a teacher's academic orientation towards subject matter and content and the resultant implications for the teacher's attitude more generally to teaching and learning. Deep cultural divides often underlie many challenges which affect the successful implementation of VETiS, with tensions occurring between VETiS teachers and teachers of non-VETiS subjects, between industry and education, and also between schools and providers of post-school VETiS (Ryan, 1997).

Research by Foskett et al. (2008) identified that head teachers can be gatekeepers to further education opportunities. Their study was commissioned for the British Department for Education and Skills in 2003 and involved 24 schools, with data obtained by interviewing students, head teachers, career teachers and tutors. Data about each school informed a profile about their social and economic context, ethos and organisation. They identified that class teachers can knowingly or unknowingly encourage a range of cultural perspectives, values, career aspirations and education knowledge. Their research emphasised that subject offerings within schools can be
promoted or not promoted through information given or withheld, and in this way information can be funnelled to suit the institutional context and ambitions of the school.

Research undertaken by Polesel and Clarke (2011), utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods in a case study, identified an exclusionary view of VETiS as being only for those at risk of being or becoming disengaged. Their paper argues that VETiS has been marginalised as a way of preserving the academic identity of schools. In addition, they note that the senior certificate structure in Australia which subordinates subject selection around inclusion in university admission scores supports this marginalisation. They also found that teacher values and expectations together with their role in presenting a legitimate culture through the academic curriculum impacts on the values of the school as expressed in subject offerings and resourcing. Interestingly, they identified that students valued VETiS offerings more highly than the schools did. In addition, research by Harreveld identified that VETiS experienced an initial stigma of being less intellectually challenging than ‘academic’ learning, resulting in a lack of prestige because it was accessible to all students (2015). Indeed, in research by Klatt et al. (2016, p. 35), one respondent stated that “VET options are viewed by many staff and parents as somewhere to hide the dummies”.

School leadership must consider the culture of the school holistically, recognising that the curriculum itself is a reflection of this culture, and that the culture may further influence the subject choices encouraged and offered to students (Watson, 2002). A school with a culture revolving around academic achievement in the HSC, and which focuses on successful transition to university study, may not wish to be perceived as a vocational school. Likewise a trade school may base its culture around flexibility, industry and vocational outcomes. These cultures could impact on the choice of school by students and parents. A school’s culture may reflect the status of a subject or be reflected in the type of students advised to undertake particular subjects of study.

Research by Porter (2006) involving interviews with vocational education stakeholders in NSW and Queensland pointed to school culture as potentially inhibiting or facilitating the successful implementation of VETiS. Disadvantages
included the high cost of VETiS in relation to resources, and the increased burden on school staff through the assessment and work placement requirements. Cultures which facilitate the successful implementation of VETiS were those which demonstrated an increase in VETiS curriculum offerings, engaged in stronger community partnerships and exhibited an openness to the sharing of differing learning and teaching practices. Similar studies show that the status of VETiS can depend on how the school promotes (or does not promote) VETiS subjects, to whom its evaluation of VETiS subjects is directed, and the degree to which VETiS subjects are included within the school’s culture (Ryan, 2002).

The research undertaken by Polesel and Clarke (2011) identified a tendency among Australian schools to exclude vocational learning from their mission. They argued that vocational learning separates students according to social background. In contrast, in other countries such as Germany and France, the division of the senior secondary curriculum into vocational and academic streams has preserved the integrity of the latter. In the Australian schooling system the widespread incorporation of VET into the secondary curriculum has not altered the tendency for VET participation to reflect socio-economic status (Polesel and Clarke, 2011, p. 525-527).

With the integration of general education and vocational goals in the majority of schools there has been some difficulty in implementation. This has been due to a general lack of understanding of VETiS and the relatively low status imposed on VETiS as a subject area, which is then exacerbated by schools presenting it as a less attractive option (Billett, 2004). In some schools there is a certain stigma attached to VETiS courses; it is seen as a “soft” option and of low status which has an impact on take-up by students (Dalley-Trim et al., 2008, p. 58). This status or perceived status can result in labelling of the “types” of students who undertake VETiS courses and the generalisation that it is more suited to those not academically inclined. School cultures which devalue the status of VETiS, and VETiS students, may negatively influence the perceived value of these courses.

Students stay in school beyond the minimum leaving age for a variety of reasons, and likewise leave school as soon as they are able for varying reasons. Fullarton (2002), using data from the 1998 cohort of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian
Youth, found that students stay for reasons such as social inclusion, personal/family expectations of schooling duration, high engagement in school activities, the lack of any other acceptable option and to increase opportunities for successful transition to post-school education and employment. VETiS is increasingly being used to encourage young people to complete school (Clarke, 2015). Gemici et al.’s (2014) research noted that the most influential factors on a student’s aspirations for completing Year 12 included their academic performance, immigration background and the expectation of their parents with regard to a tertiary education. Like Fullarton (2002), Gemici et al.’s (2014) report also used data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth to examine young people’s plans to complete Year 12. Consideration was given to the impact of socio-demographic backgrounds, academic performance, peer and parent influence, and overall perception of schooling.

2.5.4 Parity of esteem

Vocational Education and Training in Schools has been traditionally grounded in meeting the local training and skills needs of the poor, yet despite its widespread incorporation into secondary schooling, it continues to struggle in terms of parity of status and esteem (Polesel, 2008). Polesel believes that competition from the academic curriculum has weakened vocational programs and the association with social selection threatens their esteem.

The perception of where VETiS sits within the curriculum in terms of esteem is important to this research. VETiS has been seen as the “poorer cousin of academic education” (Lucas, Spencer, & Claxton, 2012, p. 43). This is mostly due to the historical development of school education as a pathway to university. It is also, however, contingent upon what it means to be intelligent. Lucas et al discredited eight myths about practical and vocational education:
These eight myths, recognised as such, give lie to any notion that vocational learning is not complex, intelligent activity in which the brain is engaged:

Myth 1: Practical learning is cognitively simple.
Myth 2: Clever people ‘grow out’ of practical learning.
Myth 3: You have to understand something before you can (learn how) to do it.
Myth 4: Clever people don’t get their hands dirty.
Myth 5: Clever people don’t need to work with their hands.
Myth 6: Practical education is only for the less ‘able’
Myth 7: Practical learning involves only lower order thinking.
Myth 8: Practical teaching is a second rate activity. (Lucas et al., 2012, p. 43)

Australian government policy and initiatives, as discussed in Section 2.4.1, support the notion that VETiS incorporation in secondary education should be a subject choice equal to other traditional academic subjects. It has been recognised in other countries that the exclusion of VETiS subjects from the university entrance process leads to the stigmatisation of VETiS courses as narrowing students’ career prospects (Polidano & Tabasso, 2016).

The term ‘parity of esteem’ refers to equality of status between different types of study within the context of education (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). In relation to VETiS, parity of esteem suggests VETiS courses and qualification routes would be viewed as equal in status to other subjects by schools, employers, students, parents and higher education institutes within the Higher School Certificate. Best practice approaches to achieving parity of esteem in a practical sense also refer to the capacity of VETiS courses to enable progression to employment and higher education in the same way as general or academic subjects do (VOCEDplus, 2016). Indeed, greater engagement in VETiS by students intending a university pathway helps improve the status of VETiS and potentially helps to improve labour market outcomes (Polidano & Tabasso, 2016).

The 1997 white paper, *Securing their future: the New South Wales Government’s reforms for the Higher School Certificate*, promoted commitment to VETiS and announced a set of principles which were designed to enhance the status of VETiS and increase the recognition given to these courses by employers, industry, post-school VETiS providers and universities (Aquilina, 1997). These principles were designed to assist educators to create systems where VETiS was available and
suitable for all students (i.e. academic and non-academic). They also aimed to cater for students’ broad interests and career pathways, as well as to provide pathways to further education and employment. An initial obstacle to establishing equality of status for VETiS was the education systems’ emphasis on academic study, culminating in generating a summative assessment through examination to gauge education success. This was damaging to the status of VETiS which provides competency based assessment through formative skills-based learning. The VET process of assessment was considered inferior in the senior education certificate by educational bodies, as it did not offer a means of comparison against traditional examinable subjects. The issue of VETiS not being assessable in the traditional school assessment context meant the subjects were at risk of being considered inferior by students and parents.

In order to address this perceived inequity, the NSW Higher School Certificate developed, in 2001, a system of parity through the development of VETiS Industry Curriculum Frameworks (ICFs). ICFs provide the opportunity for an optional examination which contributes towards a university entrance ranking (Currie & McCollow, 2002). Not all VETiS courses are ICFs, and only one ICF VETiS course may contribute to the university entrance ranking. The introduction of ICFs increased the perception of equality. However, the limit of one VETiS subject being considered towards university entrance ranking has worked against parity; in addition, NESA labels VETiS as ‘Category B subjects’, further contributing to this. This limitation and labelling contributes to the continued inequality of VETiS subjects. Research reflects that the question of parity stems from wider factors including social, economic, political and systemic ones (VOCEDplus, 2016). The significance of these findings is of interest in this research as a potential cause of variation in implementation of and participation in VETiS.

Ryan (2002) suggests that implementation and take-up of VETiS subjects is negatively affected by timetabling, resourcing and promotion, as well as by the streaming of lower performing students into VETiS. Another influence on the successful adoption of VETiS is the history of secondary schooling. VETiS in the current form of qualification training was formerly a post-school option. Consequently, its status was not in question. “School is the only institution where the status of VET is reinforced as second-class” as it is offered alongside and in
competition with academic study which has long been seen as the norm in schools (Howieson, 1993, p. 182).

Such a perspective has developed due to the historical perception that VETiS was a pathway into “blue collared” occupations for less academically-inclined students. Unfortunately, this perception seems to have created cultural barriers for parity of esteem initiatives. This perception has been reinforced by the belief that entry into university and high matriculation rates were community benchmarks of a school’s success (Malley & Keating, 2000). Malley and Keating also noted that in order to combat these prejudicial positions state governments have generated programs (such as careers advice, work education/experience and enterprise training) to be incorporated into the academic curriculum. Such innovation aimed to generate education pathways that were more relevant for individual student needs.

NCVER acknowledged that VETiS holds a variety of roles within schools and that there is a broad variation between schools and states on the history, profile and status of VETiS (Polesel et al., 2004b). Research commissioned by NCVER has highlighted aspects contributing to the parity of esteem and resultant enrolment into VETiS. These aspects include attitudinal change, the support of the principal, resourcing, costs, academic pathways, student interest, advice to students and timetabling (Polesel et al., 2004b).

It is of interest that parity of esteem for VET varies between countries. Of note is the report written Directorate-General Education and Culture of the European Commission which examined attitudes to Vocational Education and Training in the European Union. The EU has prioritised VET as essential in order to ensure that Europe remains competitive. The report was based on interviews of 26,840 European citizens aged 15 and above regarding VET. Interestingly, this report found that a higher proportion of respondents indicated that they had been advised to choose VET than had been advised to undertake general secondary or higher education. The report stated that there was “generally no kind of stigma attached to vocational training as an alternative to academic studies” (TNS Opinion and Social. Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011, p. 114)
The promotion of VETiS and attempts to create parity of esteem through government policy and initiatives in education is not unique to Australia (Polidano & Tabasso, 2016). However, in Australia there continues to be variance in the enrolment in VETiS subjects between schools.

2.5.5 Career aspirations

The post-school plans of students usually reflect their career aspirations, which are “also linked to cognitive ability” (Nguyen, 2010, p. 8). Education pathways and career aspirations are important considerations for students when choosing subjects. Research suggests that secondary school students who feel that their lack of academic success will prevent them from going to university are more likely to choose a VETiS course (Gore et al., 2017). However, there is an imbalance in school-initiated advice regarding post-school education for secondary students who “are provided with copious advice on university pathways relative to advice on vocational pathways” (Clarke, 2015, p. 1).

In NSW students may sit an optional HSC examination for VETiS courses that can contribute to university entrance rankings. Research by Crump and Stanley (2005) has confirmed that undertaking the optional examination is a popular choice by VETiS students with over 86% sitting for the 2002 examinations, thus keeping their options of a university education open. This study also found that there was a tendency for students to achieve better results in their VETiS courses in HSC examinations than in other courses deemed more academic. As only one VETiS course can contribute to a university entrance ranking, the need for students to keep university pathway options open is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of students appear to be selecting only one VETiS course (Stanley & MacCann, 2009). Stanley and McCann highlight that the motivator of post-school success is an important factor for students embarking on senior secondary education.

According to Renninger, Hidi and Krapp (2014), motivation can be related to an individual’s goals and interests and has two functions, one qualitative and the other quantitative. Qualitative motivation directs people to choose activities that will fulfil goals or meet interest needs, such as career aspirations. Quantitative motivation provides the energy and persistence in order to fulfil goals and meet interests.
(Renninger et al., 2014). It is acknowledged that “the decisive role in opening up future career paths” is dependent on the students’ motivation and focus attaining their goals (Heckhausen, Chang, & Greenberger, 2013, p. 1336). Goal orientation can have an impact on subject selection as students may have varying goals such as pathways to a career of choice, subject enjoyment and academic success.

Interest is a content-specific motivational characteristic made up of feelings and values (Schiefele, 2012). Career goals and personal interests are two motivational considerations that can contribute to engagement in learning and impact on the academic success of the student (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). The research by Hidi and Harackiewicz also found that if subject choice was related to goals then students tended to have more motivation for success. This raises the question of whether individual goals for post-school careers are a consideration by students or schools in the subject selection/offering process.

Students are generally more motivated when they are interested in what they are learning, and when that interest is related to their abilities and to what is of value to them (Hidi, 1990). Students may have a range of interests, and competing interests may involve trade-offs in subject choices (Polidano & Tabasso, 2016). Although almost three decades have passed since Hidi’s (1990) study, the issues raised are still relevant to students, according to teachers (personal communication, R Savill, Careers Adviser, 2007). Hidi emphasises that interests are a mental resource for learning, and that lack of interest corresponds to low levels of motivation in schooling (Hidi, 1990). The role of varying goals, interests and learning preferences of students in determining student subject choices was a focus of this research.

The aspect of choice is interesting to this research. An article by Clarke (2015)—a lecturer in educational policy with ten years’ experience in conducting VET—notes that choice is not always why students participate in VETiS. Ideally the concept of subject choice relates to an individual being given options and then making a selection from those options. However, Clark believes that students are in some cases “being assigned to particular curriculum streams through a deficit view of their aspirations and capabilities held by their schools” (p. 45).
Learning preferences refer to the way an individual typically prefers to go about the learning process. Much research has been undertaken in Australia in relation to VETiS and learning strategies and preferences (Smith & Dalton, 2005), indicating that VETiS learners are inclined to be more visual than verbal, prefer watching rather than reading/listening, are hands-on learners preferring to learn by doing. In the social sense, they tend to be characterised by a preference for learning in groups and prefer instructor guidance and a clear understanding of the learning requirements. The VETiS pedagogy offers relationships between educators, industry and learners that make it possible to learn by watching, practising, thinking critically, listening, drafting, reflecting, asking questions of self and others (Lucas et al., 2012). Students’ perceptions of themselves as learners influence subject selection and students who prefer a hands-on approach to learning are more inclined to choose VETiS (Klatt et al., 2016).

An article by Riele and Crump (2002) argued that student needs in relation to learning preferences, if met, can improve the learning outcomes of students. Furthermore, they found that students need to know how the knowledge being imparted is useful and relates to real life or to their own expectations and interests. For some students, their academic success may be more suited to VETiS delivery than to more traditional school academic delivery. This research also noted that the authentic nature of learning in VETiS was enhanced by using industry designed training packages as syllabus documents and practical learning activities including group projects, self-paced learning and industry relevant projects. The development of a VET system in Australia is “attempt to create an articulated system of national vocational qualifications linked to career progression” (Cooney & Long, 2010, p. 3). Employability skills are embedded in the competencies delivered, creating a learning environment that promotes cooperative learning, teamwork and arguably more engaging learning practices working towards ownership of learning and skills for lifelong learning (Riele & Crump, 2002). Whether an individual’s learning preference impacts on subject choice was a focus of the present research.

There are a range of needs that are not necessarily academic which contribute to engagement at school. This includes success in social interactions and sporting activities (Warton, 1997a). Athanasou (2009) found that a student’s need to feel successful and to feel that the education experience is of value and relevance was a
major influencer of subject selection and satisfaction for most students. However, as students tend to be more successful in the subjects that genuinely interest them, the need to feel that their time spent is worthwhile and of value is important. This, according to Athanasou (2009), is significant as subject interest and career aspirations at school appear to be relevant to subsequent occupational success and enjoyment of work.

2.5.6 Summary of student uptake of VETiS literature review

The research literature reviewed in this chapter indicates that there are various influences that affect decisions made by students on which subjects to choose as part of their senior secondary studies. These may include students’ own needs, including learning and personal needs, as well as their plans for future careers. Students as young people are influenced by the family environment and parental attitudes in relation to the purpose for senior secondary study and parents can play a role in shaping their child’s future. The perceived status of VETiS may also influence student subject choices. The influence of others is also an important factor, and a range of stakeholders—including peers, employers and teachers—influence the information given to students with the purpose of guiding them in their choices. The school learning culture may shape the way a young person feels about their senior secondary schooling; the values placed on various subject areas can motivate students to believe that one subject may have higher status than another.

The research identifies potential areas which may influence student uptake of VETiS and the reasons why a student may (or may not) select a particular subject. Each contributing influence raises questions for this research and provides an interesting platform for investigation.

2.6 Conclusion

The present research will explore how students and school leadership make decisions in relation to participation and implementation of VETiS. A comprehensive review of the literature identified major influences that affect decisions for students and school leadership in relation to VETiS. The variation between schools regarding
student participation in VETiS, and the amount and type of VETiS offered, warrants further investigation.

The empirical research and literature raised specific questions which provide a foundation for further investigation as to the experiences of Catholic schools in relation to the implementation and uptake of VETiS.

These Specific Research Questions are:

1. What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?
2. What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
3. How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?

The underlying concern is that, despite the importance placed on VETiS by government and educational bodies, there is no consistency in the uptake and implementation of VETiS within systemic Catholic schools.
CHAPTER 3: Research design

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, a conceptual framework was synthesised from the literature review related to the implementation and uptake of VETiS. The framework provides insight for the current research which examines what influences student and school leadership decisions regarding the participation in and implementation of VETiS.

The aims of this research are to examine the following Specific Research Questions:

1. What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?
2. What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
3. How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?

This chapter discusses the research design, and introduces the multisite case study utilised for this research. Section 3.2 describes the methodology, including the rationale for selecting the research sites and defining the case boundary. Participants in the study are also described in this section. Section 3.3 discusses the methods employed within each area of the research design, including the context of the study (3.3.1); the participants (3.3.2); data sources and collection (3.3.3); data analysis (3.3.4); research quality (3.3.5); and ethical considerations (3.3.6).

It is important to note that this study is in response to overall participation in and implementation of VETiS in rural Catholic schools, and is not a gender study.

3.2 Methodology

Methodology is the study of the general approach to inquiry in a given field. The methodology adopted in the present research reflected the researcher’s own ontological and epistemological assumptions. In this context, ontology is the how researcher perceives a reality; epistemology is the researcher’s beliefs regarding how to generate, use and understand knowledge related to that reality (Wahyuni, 2012). In the previous chapter, a range of influences were identified that potentially impact the implementation and engagement with VETiS. Although the literature provides
guidance into the feasible explanations for these factors, it is recognised that with complex social phenomena individual participants may hold a diversity of beliefs and experiences. The implementation and uptake of vocational education is a complex phenomenon. The researcher’s own ontological perspective aligns with critical realism as conceived by Bhaskar (2014). This ontology recognises the existence of an independent reality but acknowledges a person’s comprehension of that reality as subjective and theory-laden. Welch, Piekkari and Plakoyiannaki (2011) have described the attempt to understand how and why events occurred as contextualised explanation (p. 749). Sense is made of a phenomenon by considering the general, that is theory, and the particular, that is contextual data. As it is this researcher’s intention is to examine participants’ experiences within their specific contexts, it was anticipated that a method of coding of data guided by the literature could offer specific terms that would “give the data a voice” (Blair, 2015, p. 19). However, it was also recognised that context influences individuals’ beliefs and practices and hence opportunity to explore experiences not documented in the literature was pursued. Thus, in this study, the researcher acknowledges her epistemological assumptions are based on interpretivism (Blair, 2015).

3.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm

Creswell (2015) explains a paradigm as a pattern of values, methods and beliefs within which research is conducted and which orientate thinking and methods. The interpretivist paradigm influenced this study’s design. It offers an understanding of dynamic social and human realms where historically-situated interpretations supported by different theories are used to understand the ‘social-life world’ (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism (which is referred to by other researches as 'social constructivism', see Crotty 1998) is used.

Constructionism, post modernism, phenomenology and hermeneutics are philosophies that share key values regarding interpretation, context, subjectivity and reflexivity. Phenomenology may be likened to lived experiences. Hermeneutics refers to the interplay between parts and the whole. Constructionism and postmodernism emphasise the role of culture, dialogue and text, societal narrative and symbols as being crucial to understanding and knowledge (Malterud, 2016). These research approaches contribute to the interpretative paradigm which is a
common methodological and theoretical basis for qualitative research methods (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). However, as previously argued, there are limitations to pure interpretivist methods for theory building and hence this research recognises the role of prior theoretical knowledge in seeking to understand complex social contexts.

The interpretive paradigm is appropriate for this study because the study seeks to understand how participants make sense of their lives and experiences within specific contexts (Creswell, 2014). The specific context of interest in this research is participants’ experiences in VETiS subject selection or implementation for senior secondary study in rural systemic Catholic schools. The interpretive paradigm acknowledges that there are a range of reasons that influence human behaviour. The term epistemology concerns the ways in which knowledge is generated and negotiated (O’Donoghue, 2006). For that reason, epistemologically, the findings in this research are viewed under the beliefs, ideas, and values that both the researcher and the research participants hold (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, in conducting this research Yin’s (2014) cautioning is acknowledged, that particular biases may emerge.

VET in Australia has experienced an unprecedented rate of change in recent times (Dempsey, 2013). This rapid rate of change justifies inquiry methodologies that allow for flexibility to describe, explore and explain both the context and technical characteristics of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). These conditions support the use of case studies over other methodologies, as case studies may offer the sensitivity to acknowledge the real-life phenomena (Gilham, 2004).

3.2.2 Case study

The case study approach allows phenomena to be studied in their real-life situation (Yin, 2014). Case study methodology is appropriate to this research because of its characteristics of being “particularistic, descriptive and heuristic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). ‘Particularistic’ means that case studies focus on a particular phenomenon. In this research the phenomenon under study is the implementation and uptake of VETiS. ‘Descriptive’ means that the research findings will be presented as a description of the phenomenon under study. ‘Heuristic’ means that the end result
may illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon being studied. According to Yin (2014, p. 10), the case study method is particularly appropriate when the researcher is interested in describing the phenomenon and explaining the situation based on potential theoretical relationships. Thus often it explores ‘How?’ or ‘Why?’ type questions, an approach which has been described by Welch, et al. (2011) as “contextualised explanation” (p. 741).

Case study methodology is relevant to this research as it seeks depth rather than breadth (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995). It also allows for exploration in detail through a variety of data gathering strategies with various participants and informants. Participants are those actively engaged in the activity and informants are those observing the activity. The capacity for depth means the research is designed to identify the authentic viewpoints of participants and not limit responses to the researchers’ desire to prove a theory.

The notion of authenticity is considered with regard to the legitimacy of researchers speaking on behalf of others, or challenging the idea that collectively people have only one perspective (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000). The study outcomes are suggestive rather than conclusive and will provide one perspective of seeing the phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). The scope for case studies to give authentic responses allows for deep context-specific exploration of the reasons behind variation between schools in VETiS participation and implementation. Case study, through the development of a rich description of the situation, allows for different readers to make different interpretations and draw diverse conclusions (Flyvberg, 2007). The goal of this study was not to be all things to all people—it was to give the researcher a greater understanding of the problem. Readers of this research may find relevance to similar or different situations; therefore the goal of this study is to be different things to different people.

Central to this research is the variation across schools in the implementation and uptake of VETiS, which was explored through multiple situations within a bounded case (Creswell, 2013). Case study methodology has previously been used in the study of Vocational Education and Training, including studies involving multiple sites which enable data to show the uniqueness of each site yet identify themes consistent across all or several sites (Falk & Guenther, 2006). A multisite explanatory case
study has been chosen as the methodology for this research, as contextual conditions among different schools may be highly pertinent to the issue of study (Yin, 2014). The capacity to show data unique to a site within a case study involving multiple sites, yet having the capacity to identify common themes, is appropriate to answer the research problem of why there are inconsistencies between schools in the participation in and implementation of VETiS. A multiple case study also provides the opportunity to test conclusions through replication (Yin, 2014).

3.2.3 Case boundary and sites

Selecting the case sites and boundaries are vital steps in designing the case study investigation. The boundary of the case includes the nature and time covered by the case, including the geographical area of interest (Yin, 2014). The data collection and pilot phase of this research was conducted between 2011 and 2013. The case was bounded by accessibility to the research through location and the Catholic education system and involved multisite analysis. Multisite research requires the sites to be similar in some ways (Stake, 2013).

Seven schools were invited, and accepted, to participate and were purposely selected as they are similar in student demographic and type of Catholic school. The schools are all systemic, regional Catholic Schools and work under diocesan system management and a diocesan Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The schools are similar sizes and provide secondary education from Year 7 to Year 12, therefore experience the same types of considerations in curriculum delivery. The schools are all country schools and attract primarily country students.

To increase the validity of the research, three schools were chosen to be pilot schools and four schools as site schools (Chapter 1 Table 1-1). The pilot phase data collection varied in the use of interpretative interview with school staff and survey with students and parents from the conduct of this research. This was appropriate to the purpose of the pilot and pre-research phase. Pilot schools were used to evaluate the feasibility of the research, develop data collection processes, identify adverse events, and ultimately refine the design of the study. Some of these schools' VETiS statistical participation data were discussed in the preamble describing the reasons for undertaking this study. Data gained through interview and survey during pre-
research with pilot schools was not included in data analysis for this research. The four case site schools were not involved in piloting the data collection instruments, their data has been analysed in response to the research questions.

3.3 Methods

In this section the methods adopted for this study are discussed. Methods refer to procedures intended to operationalise the methodology in different situations (Malterud, 2016).

3.3.1 Context

There are four Case Site Schools involved in this study (Schools 1–4\(^3\)), and three other schools were included as pilot schools in the pre-research phase in order to refine the research instruments and process planning (Schools 5-7)\(^4\). All seven schools are located within the case geographical boundary. The reason for including seven schools initially but limiting the final research phase to four schools was to increase the potential for schools and participants to remain anonymous. The selection of schools was purposeful but also included reasons of proximity and accessibility to the researcher. Specifically, each school was regional, country, coeducational and governed by a Catholic diocesan education system. All schools involved in this study were similar in size and demographic, and provided a complete secondary education from Years 7 to 12.

The selection of which schools were designated as pilot schools and which were case schools was random. However, as there were two Catholic diocesan education systems involved, both pilot and case schools included schools from both dioceses.

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\(^3\) Five schools were discussed in the first chapter to explain the motivations for undertaking this research. These were schools coded A-E, of these schools only 3 were included in the research as case school sites (B=Case School 2, C=Case School 4, E=Case School 3). Two other schools were added to increase the anonymity, these were Case School 1 and 7).

\(^4\) The pilot schools included two discussed in the first chapter, these were schools A=5 and D=6. School 7 was also used as a pilot school. Schools A and D were used in the pre-research preamble to explain the variation of VETiS participation between schools. The piloting of research instruments was limited to schools A (5), D (6) and 7.
Figure 3-1 shows the case study process adopted in this research; each element will be discussed in the following sections.

In accordance with qualitative research, this research was conducted within the schools as they are the natural setting of the participants (Creswell, 2014). This gave the researcher the opportunity to have face-to-face contact with the participants in focus groups and in semi-structured interviews.

3.3.2 Participants

Five categories of participants were selected based on their potential involvement in the acts of participating in, advising, offering, and implementing VETiS. This included students (N=321), parents (N=17), teachers (N=24), school leadership (N=16) and diocesan (N=4) leadership. Consequently it was possible “to discover, understand and gain insight …from those (from) which most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).
Participants were selected on the basis that their perceptions may reflect “different, even contending perspectives” (Rubin & Rubin, 2011, p. 64) with the aim of adding credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to the research findings.

This research seeks to describe the phenomena under study from the perspective of the participants, therefore it is intended that the results will be believable, or credible, in their eyes. Transferability is enhanced by purposefully selecting participants (Merriam, 2009) whose experiences fit within the context of this research, either as those who have selected school subjects or those who may have influenced school subject implementation. In order to increase the dependability of any findings of this research, four site schools were included and the categories of participants replicated in each. In this way comparisons could be made between the responses from category types from the different schools within the context of the case under study. Confirmability acknowledges that the researcher brings their own perspective to the research (Gethin & Clune-Mulvaney, 2009). In this research confirmability was enhanced through careful checking and rechecking the data throughout the data collection phase, including paraphrasing key points back to the participants, and checking for understanding. This was done in order to ensure that their intended response was accurately recorded and to reduce the potential for researcher bias.

The participants selected were those who had recently participated in either subject selection or subject implementation decisions for Year 11 studies. Since this study explores the factors which influence student and school leadership decisions regarding the offering, participation and implementation of VETiS, it is appropriate to ask those who have been recently engaged in subject decision-making processes either as students, school leadership or as other key stakeholders for their opinions.

Purposeful selection was adopted as the process for inviting participants (Creswell, 2014). The following criteria were used:

- Students and parents: Recent (within six months) participation in subject selection processes for Year 11 study as a student or parent.
- Teachers: Current VETiS experience in Stage 6 as a teacher or VETiS coordinator.
- School leadership: Current career adviser, principal, curriculum coordinator or diocesan leader involved in Stage 6 curriculum advice and support.
- Schools: rural NSW systemic Catholic school (Years 7–12) within a two hour travel time radius of the researcher’s place of residence.

Inclusion of both teachers and school leadership provided this research differing perspectives about the research problem, through focus groups and interviews. Teachers with VETiS experience could provide insights from their experience with students, parents, industry and school leadership. This research provided the opportunity for teachers to share their knowledge and frustrations related to the implementation of VETiS courses. Whereas, school leadership perspective added the influences involved with whole of school management together with personal experience related to VETiS.

Invitations to participate in this study were given to participants, school staff and leadership were emailed, parents/students were sent letters and students were also invited by teachers verbally. It was anticipated that the provision of comprehensive information about the purpose of the research would minimise any possible concerns which the participants might have. The information provided included an explanation of the ethical frameworks and safeguards in place to enable participants to feel comfortable with the study. Table 3-1 is an overview of the participant categories and number who participated in this case study.

Table 3-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of participants</th>
<th>Surveys</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VETiS coordinators</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum coordinators</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career advisers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocese leadership</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Site schools x 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot schools x3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocese x 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>338</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistical data from 2005-2010 was included in the preamble from two pilot schools and three case schools in the pre-research stage (and pre-pilot) to test the feasibility
of undertaking this research. Their statistical VETiS participation data was used to describe the variation in participation between schools. To increase the anonymity of the schools another diocese was invited to participate, two more schools were then involved, one pilot and one case. The (then) three pilot schools were employed in the development of the research instruments through feedback, trialling and re-testing the processes prior to the conduct of the research. The (then) four case schools were involved in this research data collection, data from these schools was used in response to the research questions.

3.3.3 Data sources and collection

Data from multiple sources were gathered which were analysed in two ways. Firstly data were analysed guided by the theory identified in Chapter 2. Secondly, data were analysed inductively, identifying patterns and emergent themes. Data were collected using focus groups, semi-structured individual interviews, online surveys and document analysis. Yin (1999) has positioned case study research as a stand-alone methodology in which the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data is appropriate. Data gathering strategies were informed and refined from the pilot phase. Interviews and surveys were piloted at three schools. Table 3-2 shows the data collection strategy mapped to the questions within each strategy, which are in turn mapped to the specific research questions.
### Table 3-2

**Data gathering map**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Specific</th>
<th>Data Collection Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What influences student and school leadership decision-making regarding selection and offering of VETiS courses in Catholic secondary schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?</td>
<td>PS – Questions 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SS – All Questions</td>
<td>KP – Questions 4, 6, 13-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?</td>
<td>PS – Question 18</td>
<td>KP – Questions 15 – 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SS – All questions</td>
<td>Sys – Questions 15 – 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KP – Questions 1-12</td>
<td>FT - Questions 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sys – Questions 1 – 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SS = Student survey

KP = Key school personnel and Leadership Interview

IS = Interview students

Sys = System leadership

PS = Parent survey

FT = Focus group VETiS teachers

### 3.3.3.1 Document analysis

Documents are often more readily accessible and the analysis of them may be less intrusive as a research tool than interviews and surveys (Merriam, 1998). The documents analysed include subject selection handbooks and/or subject information sheets.

One of the advantages of documentary analysis is stability; in this context stability means that the data being reviewed was an existing document previously published for the purposes of school subject selection processes, and was not influenced by
this research process. The analysis of subject information documents provided insight into the information which had been given to students and parents to guide the subject selection processes for Year 11 study. Documentation was reviewed at each of the site schools. Other strengths in using document analysis in case study research is that it exists prior to the establishment of a case study and the data is exact (Yin, 2014).

Documents are a product of the context in which they are produced. They may provide direct or tangential insight to issues related to the research. This limitation of document analysis as a research strategy is considered in relation to selectivity, incompletion and quality variability (Merriam, 1998). Nevertheless documentation analysis contributes to the reliability of other forms of data analysis, adding another data source for triangulation, and complimenting other data gathering strategies.

3.3.3.2 Survey

This research used a survey instrument (Appendices A and B) designed to identify beliefs and attitudes, and to provide insight into the opinions and experiences (Creswell, 2013, 2014) of students as they selected subjects for senior secondary studies. The survey collected both qualitative and quantitative data.

The survey used a Likert scale to generate numbers which could be analysed statistically to ascertain the reasons why students chose different subjects. Free text response questions were also included to identify who advised students for each subject chosen, the nature of the advice received, why they chose to study or not study VETiS, their career interests, and their parents’ expectations regarding HSC and subject choice. If students had not chosen a VETiS subject they were asked open text response questions regarding the reasons why they did not choose VETiS. The survey aimed to identify patterns in the reasons influencing subject selection between subjects, within schools and between schools. It also aimed to identify patterns and themes, or anomalies, in subject advice, career links to subject choices and specific reasons for selecting or not selecting VETiS.

Surveys were conducted during class time using online survey software. The completion of the survey was supervised by teachers at each case site school. The
teachers had been given information by the researcher about the research and were familiar with the survey tool prior to giving it to the students to complete. Prior approval had been sought by the researcher from the school, parents and students. Each case site school had the same survey questions, however the online survey software which was used assigned a unique code to each set of school data.

The survey was posted online using online survey software SurveyMonkey (http://www.surveymonkey.com). The online option was appropriate, as the students were aged between 17 and 18 and were accustomed to a world which incorporated technology for entertainment, learning and communication. The online option enabled the data to be collated and managed with minimal involvement from the researcher. Students were given the online survey during classes with approval from the school and parents. Parents were sent a letter with the survey address and the offer of a paper based survey if preferred. The purpose of this alternative was to cater for parents who may not have been as comfortable with technology as their children were.

It was intended that information generated from the survey would explain:

- Why students chose particular subjects;
- Who advised students on choosing subjects;
- What advice affects VETiS subject decisions;
- Reasons for not choosing VETiS;
- Whether and to what extent Australian Tertiary Admission Ranking (ATAR) affected subject choice; and
- Whether career interest affected subject choice.

The survey included four-point Likert scale responses to gauge how important specific reasons were for subject choice. These reasons were pre-determined during the pilot phase of this research. To compare the reasons more influential in VETiS subject selections, both VETiS subject choices and non-VETiS subject choices were included. The survey included open response questions related to the nature of advice given.

The data sought in parent surveys (Appendix C) explored reasons for the subject advice they give to their child and how confident they were in giving subject advice.
In addition it explored what information was useful to parents when advising students. Parents were asked which subjects they would or would not advise their child to study and who they believed should provide subject advice to students. Parents were also asked their opinion on VETiS subjects. The parent survey collected both qualitative and quantitative data in the form of multiple choice and open response questions.

3.3.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

The choice of interview as a data gathering strategy is congruent with the interpretive focus of this research (Holstein & Gubriem, 1995). The interview was selected as it allows participants to discuss their interpretations of the world as they see it and to express how they regard a situation from their own point of view (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017).

This research strategy allows for flexibility, enabling the interviewer to use multisensory channels such as verbal and non-verbal cues in gaining data. Furthermore the interview enabled the interviewer to structure the data gathering, while allowing for spontaneity and the capacity to probe for more complete responses (Cohen et al., 2017). Therefore interviews were designed to be semi-structured, with similar questions asked of each participant; additional questions were designed and utilised if required in order to expand responses.

Interview data collection involved the researcher visiting each school during both the pilot and main study stages of the research. The researcher conducted the interviews face-to-face and each interview was recorded with permission from each participant, using the voice recording application on a tablet computer. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, curriculum coordinators, career advisers and diocesan leadership during the data gathering phase at case schools. Interviews were also conducted during the pilot phase with students, parents, school personnel and diocese leadership staff. Each audio file was then transcribed using a professional transcription service engaged by the researcher, upon recommendation from the research supervisor.
3.3.3.4 Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted at each of the selected case study schools with VETiS teachers, as they have a shared understanding and experience of VETiS. Thus they were able to provide information relating to decisions made by school leadership and students that relate to implementation and participation.

Focus groups allow for the gathering of in-depth data in a social context, aiming to gain incremental answers to questions which go beyond the level of superficial explanation (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). The use of focus groups allows for the exploration of feelings or opinions in free-flowing open-ended discussion, providing an opportunity for collection of data about the research topic generated from group interactions (Freitas, Oliveira, Jenkins, & Popjoy, 1998). It has been also acknowledged that “Focus groups can serve as a preliminary data gathering strategy to further refine questioning” (Morgan, 1997, p. 2).

Focus group data collection involved the researcher visiting each school during both the pilot and main study stages of the research. The researcher conducted the focus groups face-to-face and each group was recorded with permission from each participant, using a voice recording application on a tablet computer. Each audio file was then transcribed using a professional transcription service engaged by the researcher, upon recommendation from the research supervisor.

3.3.3.5 The researcher

Yin (2014) suggests that the researcher must have a range of appropriate skills, such as the capacity to ask meaningful questions and to interpret responses; good listening skills; an unbiased approach; and the ability to adapt quickly to changing situations while retaining a firm grasp on the issue being studied. This researcher has over twenty-five years’ experience in Vocational Education and Training in multiple contexts, including ten years’ experience in secondary school VETiS education. In addition, this researcher has had over thirty years in both academic and administrative computing and was adequately prepared for the study. The researcher is inextricably involved with the research process in interpretive research design (Edwards, 1999). In this research, the researcher collected the data by
interviewing participants, conducting focus groups and developing the survey instrument and interview questions (Creswell, 2014).

Within the context of this research, the researcher has worked with many school personnel in most of the schools. The benefits of this “deep, insider research” are the awareness of organisational history and culture, trust, rapport and the potentially ‘rich’ shared history which the researcher brings to the research process (Edwards, 1999).

3.3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is defined as:

…a process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is be learned and deciding what you will tell others. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 153)

The data analysis occurred in two phases. Stage one, the deductive phase, involved reading the data (transcripts and survey responses) and sorting utterances and statements on the basis of the two issues under study and the influences identified in the literature review. Stage two, the inductive phase, involved a second pass of the data in which coding involved pattern matching to record similarities or anomalies among schools and participants in response to the specific research questions.

The data analysis occurred concurrently with the management and collection of data (Saldana, Leavy, & Beretvas, 2014). The iterative analysis alternated between readings of the data and an “etic use of existing models, explanations and theories” (Tracy, 2013, p. 184). This involved coding information as location, that is, from which Case Site School and from which participant it originated. The information was then analysed deductively to consider evidence of examples or anomalies which may support (or renounce) the influences discussed in the literature review and identify any other case- or site-specific influences. As interview transcriptions and notes taken during school visits were fleshed out, the documents were highlighted and
comments were recorded regarding the salient portions. Additional information sought to clarify the participants’ meanings when needed. Additional probe questions were included in the interview questions as well as utilisation of paraphrasing to ensure the participant’s intended meaning was clear.

Following this, the researcher considered the data to determine if more evidence could support (or refute) the influences that were discussed in the literature review (Creswell, 2014). This involved consideration of the information gathered from other data collection strategies or different site schools.

In summary, in this research two approaches to data analysis were adopted. The first approach drew on the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 2, which provided categories or codes. This approach may be described as a priori or deductive analysis. A priori coding occurs when the categories or codes are “created beforehand and applied to the text” (Blair, 2015, p. 16). Thus, a set of categories was developed, informed by the literature review, in order to manage and organise the data. Following this first analysis of the data, the second approach involved again reading and re-reading the transcripts and identifying elements of the data that were not able to be fitted to the categories developed in the first approach. This process allowed for new codes to be developed to enrich the analysis, and subsequently add richness to the conceptual framework. Thus the data analysis was both deductive and inductive throughout the research process at each stage of data collection, data display and data reflection.

3.3.4.1 Deductive data analysis

Chapter 2 presented a conceptual framework which reviewed literature around potential influences which may give insight to explain variation between schools regarding the two issues of implementation and uptake of VETiS. During the deductive phase of data analysis, categories and codes were developed to record participant experience and understandings. Thus data analysis involved working backward and forward among the data collected and seeking exemplars (or anomalies) of those influences and issues. The conceptual framework identified five potential influences for each issue. The five influences that related to implementation of VETiS were:
• Policy and the National Training Agenda;
• Resourcing;
• Cost of external provision;
• School and community expectations; and
• School and system leadership.

The five influences that related to the uptake of VETiS were:
• Parent expectations;
• School personnel, peer and employer influence;
• School culture;
• Parity of esteem; and
• Career aspirations.

3.3.4.2 Inductive data analysis

Inductive data analysis involved identifying and interpreting “the poignant examples that illustrate the complexity of the data” (Tracy, 2013, p. 208). Pattern matching was used in this research as an analytic technique (Yin, 2014). The process involved analysing the data “bit by bit” and then “putting it together”, drawing conclusions and answers in response to the research questions (Creswell, 2015). The researcher sought to identify examples of similar occurrences in the case site schools or any anomalies which may explain the reasons behind variation between schools in the implementation and uptake of VETiS. Simultaneously and iteratively, the data were reflected upon in order to identify any other influences not previously identified. The goal was to provide structure and order to the volume of data gathered, and to make sense out of it (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Patton, 1990). This process was validated by “the central facets of reflexivity” (Blair, 2015, p. 15), through constant internal questioning and scrutiny.

Finally, exemplars and vignettes were used in the form of participant quotes to help the readers enter into the arguments presented by the researcher.
3.3.4.3 Data management

Initially, a record of analysis activities was created, noting the chronological order of data collection, contact details, research permissions and a discussion of any initial analysis such as school profile and VETiS activity (Tracy, 2013). This enabled the researcher to stay focused on data collection, and to record any issues and information of interest or potential interest.

An analytic memo was created for each case site school (Tracy, 2013). Analytic memos are a “think-piece of reflexive free writing”, created to record first impressions, reminders, preliminary connections and notes relevant to the phenomena being explored (Saldana et al., 2014, p. 98). This involved a summary of key findings, considerations, quotations and statements from each school which consolidated the data against each key influence together with anomalies and other emergent findings. Thematic data comparing influences for all site schools were stored in dedicated files, using word processing and spreadsheet software. Each file was intuitively named and chronologically dated.

QSR International’s NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software package (NVIVO, 2014) was used to assist in the management of transcribed interview data, in order to locate textual data, match codes, count incidences of occurrences and find combinations. The advantage of using NVivo was its capability for coding, querying, sorting and retrieving data via Boolean (“and/or/not”) searches (Tracy, 2013, p. 205). This tool assisted in identifying meaningful patterns and frequency of codes. Data were then able to be manipulated, ordered and presented in a number of ways (Yin, 2014). Transcribed individual and focus group interviews were uploaded into the NVivo software which enabled the researcher to organise and analyse the data. Key terms were searched for and coded according to influences. This program also allowed for word frequencies to be identified and linked to participant categories. The transcribed interviews were also stored into intuitively named computer files, for further analysis.

3.3.4.4 Analysis of survey data

This research used the online survey tool SurveyMonkey to collect and collate data from students. SurveyMonkey features a data analysis tool presenting the actual
data recorded and graphs/images to reflect quantitative responses to questions asked. However, as the survey link was particular to each case site school, in order to compare data between schools succinctly the survey data were downloaded in spreadsheet format for further analysis and graphical presentation. Computers, through a process of exploration and discovery, can provide efficiencies in data management and review (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2006). Computer-assisted data analysis assists the researcher in storing and coding data, finding relationships between concepts and producing graphics of relationships (Sproule & Walter, 2006).

Survey data were displayed in tables reflecting the four-point Likert scales in order to present the reasons for subject choice against the frequency distribution in percentages and means. Tables were also used to compare data across schools derived from focus groups and interviews.

3.3.4.5 Data display

Data display is the organised assembly of the information gathered, which permits analysis in order to discuss findings (Glesne, 2011). Categorisation of data allows for reduction in the complexity of the information gathered, directing analysis, identifying objects, and allowing for ordering and relational analysis (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000, p. 2). Data display allows for pattern matching within the data in order to explore the ways the patterns and categories interact and interplay (Saldana et al., 2014). Data collected were organised in computer files intuitively named, and a record of analysis summarised research activities. Analytic memos provided the researcher with an opportunity to summarise and consolidate ideas about each school.

The data recording and display coded participants and the type of data collection method involved; this is shown in Table 3-3. Participant data were coded to limit potential identifiability and participants were given pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Included in participant codes is an S, I or FG to indicate that the data came from a Survey, Interview or Focus Group respectively. The number generated indicates a random number assigned to participants in the same activity. For example TFG-4 13/10/12 indicates that the data came from a focus group. This teacher is number 4 of 28 teachers who engaged in this activity, as per Table 3-3.
The focus group was conducted on 13 October 2012. A code such as Sara SS37—30/10/12 indicates the date on which the participant with the pseudonym Sara participated in the survey and that she was student number 37 of 468.

Table 3-3

*Participant codes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant group</th>
<th>Pseudonym coding</th>
<th>Coding number</th>
<th>Examples of names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>1-468</td>
<td>Sara, Sam, Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1-17</td>
<td>Pam, Penny, Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS Teachers</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>1-28</td>
<td>Tess, Tara, Tony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Key Personnel</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>Karen, Karl, Krissy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocese Leadership</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Deb, Danny, Delia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data were coded both manually and computer-aided. Each case school was given an individual file for site-specific data collected. Additionally data were stored in SurveyMonkey and NVivo. A “loose analysis outline” (Tracy, 2013, p. 198) for each research question and listing potential information which the data was attending to assisted the researcher to code and display the data.

The data were categorised into codes and themes through description, classification and interpretation focused on the influences identified in the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2. Table 3-4, Table 3-5 and Table 3-6 illustrate the specific research questions and category codes generated from the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2 which underpinned themes and concepts identified in this research.
### Table 3-4
*Codes to concepts, Specific Research Question 1*

**Specific Research Question 1:** What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School process and structure of planned subject information dissemination.</td>
<td>Subject information and advice.</td>
<td>Differing subject information practices between schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine interest; good at subject; good for ATAR; pre-requisite for future study; subject useful for career intent; skills for personal life; good for HSC; good on resume; friends are in class; like the teacher; only suitable subject on line; help get a job; enjoyed subject before; subject has reputation for achieving high HSC exam results.</td>
<td>Reasons for subject choice.</td>
<td>Subject choice reasons differ between subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling factors influencing subject choice for VETiS.</td>
<td>Subject advice and reputation.</td>
<td>Influence of subject advice on subject reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors which create a barrier for VETiS subject choice who, what, why.</td>
<td>Subject advice and reputation.</td>
<td>How and why advice is given. How subject reputation is formed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3-5
Codes to concepts, Specific Research Question 2

Specific Research Question 2: What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who advises, school organisation of subject information dissemination.</td>
<td>Types of advice.</td>
<td>Differences in advice and advisers between schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice given, type of advice, who advises, which subjects are more likely to receive advice.</td>
<td>Advisers.</td>
<td>Who advises to study VETiS?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type, format, content, conditions, language, limits.</td>
<td>Differences between schools.</td>
<td>Written information influence on subject choice decisions and perceptions of VETiS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-6
Codes to concepts, Specific Research Question 3

Specific Research Question 3: How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who makes decisions on subject implementation, key stakeholders considered?</td>
<td>Subject decision process.</td>
<td>Can the way schools use collaborative practices, or not, influence which subjects are implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for subject implementation decisions.</td>
<td>Subject decision process.</td>
<td>What informs subject implementation decisions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling factors.</td>
<td>School leadership.</td>
<td>Differences in enabling factors in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School vision and reputation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers.</td>
<td>School leadership.</td>
<td>Differences in barrier factors between schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School vision and reputation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.4.6 Data reflection

The nature of interpretive research is to gather a large volume of material needing to be explained, this required simultaneously gathering data while considering the intrinsic meaning of the data collected (Sproule & Walter, 2006). This involved constant review and contemplation by the researcher at each stage of data analysis. The initial step in data reflection was data immersion where the researcher read and reread the data and talked with others about the data (Tracy, 2013). The second step was incubation, dedicating time to make sense of what the data said in order to find similarities or anomalies with the key influences discussed in Chapter 2. The third step was consideration of data for each case school (Chapters 4–7). Finally the understandings were compared between the case schools to identify similarities or differences which may explain the variation between schools in the uptake and implementation of VETiS (Chapter 8).

The data analysis process involved two phases, a deductive phase (Section 3.3.4.1) and an inductive phase (Section 3.3.4.2). However, the researcher recognised that all meanings and interpretations of experiences are interactively and culturally constructed. This meant that during the data analysis great care was taken not to trivialise interpretations but rather to look for deeper insight. This included consideration of how emerging findings from the intermediate stages of analysis informed subsequent interviews and analyses.

Data reflection included critical review of the data to ensure firstly that it accurately recorded the participants’ experiences and understandings. This critical review also sought to identify any emerging trends or influences not previously identified. Critical review required vigilance and honesty on behalf of the researcher to ensure that important concepts were included (whether they had been previously identified in the literature review or not), and that data was correctly linked to the two issues under study. To avoid the potential for every response to be included in this research, critical review also involved sorting relevant from non-relevant data collected. Non-relevant data was considered to be data that did not address either of the issues under exploration or provide insight into the main or specific research questions in this study. This ‘non-relevant’ data could be described as interesting but not related to the topic.
Data reflection also drew attention to the potential for scepticism on behalf of the researcher when interpreting data. During data reflection it was necessary for the researcher to be objective and not be influenced by personal feelings or opinions when presenting the facts. This at times revealed confronting data to support a theory of which the researcher was previously unaware or with which the researcher did not agree.

Rigorous data reflection involved reading and rereading the transcripts and survey data to ensure the voices of the participants were accurately and fully considered. Data reflection occurred iteratively with repeated reading of data throughout collection and analysis, and simultaneously through consideration of all data sources and methods concurrently. During this research, nuances and ‘bits’ of relevant information were revealed after the initial read of the data; indeed later readings provided richness and depth to data reflection.

Quality data reflection processes promoted a clear and accurate record of participant understandings through rigor and critical review with focussed awareness of the risks associated with scepticism. Efficient data management and data display allowed for the data to be linked with the two issues related to this research to give insight into the main research question and specific questions.

The Main Research Question is: What influences student and school leadership decision-making regarding selection and offering of VETiS courses in Catholic secondary schools?

The Specific Research Questions which focus the understandings are:

1. What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?
2. What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
3. How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?
3.3.4.7  Explanation of understandings

In case study research, an explanation is intended to act as an answer to a specific research question (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2012). Indeed, an aspect of explanatory case studies according to Yin (2014) is to explore causal relationships between why and how type questions. This research employs a contrastive explanation approach between the case school sites in the discussion of understandings. Contrastive explanations allow for identification of the factors that influence the outcome within this research context. In this research, variation between schools in the implementation and uptake of VETiS may differ from the factors that result elsewhere.

The process of data interpretation from the analysis involves asking the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions of the data. ‘How’ does the data provide information in response to the research question and ‘why’ does the data give evidence to support any themes identified. By using a case study approach to data gathering, both quantitative and qualitative data are integrated into a coherent whole to allow for inferences to be made. Exemplars, being the significant examples identified by the researcher in the data through coding (Tracy, 2013), were employed to illustrate the researcher’s understandings of the issue under study. These allowed the researcher to present quotes from different participants to demonstrate the similarities or differences between case site schools.

The explanation of understandings was presented in narrative through descriptions and themes representative of the multiple perspectives of the participants and in detailed description of the setting (Creswell, 2014). The data display, using tables and figures, provides for holistic analysis and a depth of information in order to point to conclusions of the research.

The methods used to in this research, which includes presentation of the data using narrative and case analysis, is appropriate for this research as it provided for locally causal questions examining “processes in situ” (Tracy, 2013). This involved asking salient questions which sought information from targeted participants within the context of their real world environment. This information provided insight into the research problem and illuminated the influences that cause variation in the implementation and uptake of VETiS in rural Catholic secondary schools.
3.3.5 Research quality

The quality of the research depends upon its trustworthiness, a process which explains and demonstrates the probity concerning the generation of research understandings. This process also demonstrates a congruency between the research questions and the processes adopted to explore them (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 22). In order to demonstrate the trustworthiness, four characteristics are honoured: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. To further ensure quality within this research, limitations are also acknowledged.

3.3.5.1 Credibility

To ensure credibility, the following strategies are employed (Creswell, 2014):

- Data triangulation—four sites, multiple sources including interviews, focus groups, survey and document analysis.
- Member checking—through using the informants to check the truth value of the data in the interpretation of their information.
- Debriefing with supervisors—two supervisors from the Australian Catholic University give feedback on the research.

3.3.5.2 Transferability

To ensure transferability, the report adopts thick descriptors of the case to allow readers to relate the research to similar or differing contexts. Transferability is also enhanced by purposeful selection of the participants. This includes similar representation from each site in quantity and profile. The students participating in the survey are Year 11 students at the commencement of their senior secondary studies. They were selected because they have recently been involved in subject selection and allocation, making their experience timely and relevant. School staff at each site were purposefully selected based on criteria that include job role, VETiS experience and involvement in subject decision-making processes within the site.
3.3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability of the research is maximised by employment of the pilot phase, triangulation of data, coding/recoding of data and through an audit trail of research questions in relation to data collection strategies. Table 3.2 represents how the data collection strategies relate to the research questions, demonstrating triangulation of data and depth of research reliability.

3.3.5.4 Confirmability

Triangulation of data reinforces confirmability by reducing potential researcher bias by gaining data from multiple sources and participants. Data are displayed for analysis in order to reinforce confirmability and to provide an audit trail. The audit trail demonstrates the triangulation of data with clearly presented diagrams, tables of data and interview statements.

3.3.5.5 Limitations

Case study inquiry is sometimes seen as demonstrating less-scientific character than other approaches (Yin, 2014). However, this criticism has become less relevant as a result of public awareness of the shortfall of a science of social life (Gomm et al., 2000). Nevertheless, when utilising case study methodology, criticisms must be acknowledged and addressed accordingly. A misconception in case study research is that it may hold more bias to the researcher’s preconceived ideas or theories than other methods of inquiry. The researcher is obliged to be transparent and open about these issues, as researcher bias and arbitrary judgement may distort the outcomes (Flyvberg, 2007). These limitations are acknowledged.

A further limitation is the criticism that case study findings are not generalisable (Gomm, Hammerseley, & Foster, 2011). It is acknowledged that the schools in this research may be typical or atypical of other schools within a similar context.

A further limitation is identified concerning the multisite case study used in this research, being that it is potentially deemed the equivalent of multiple experiments (Yin, 2014). Generalisations are accomplished in the same way as experiments; however, within the qualitative paradigm the sample size of four sites would likely be
insufficient to satisfy the sampling strategy. This research aimed to mitigate this risk by including a broad variety of stakeholder categories, and many participants, with the aim of including the perspectives of multiple stakeholder categories within the four sites. It is acknowledged that within this research the findings are limited to systemic Catholic schools in rural New South Wales.

A limitation of using online survey is that respondents did not have the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher (Bernard, 2011). Piloting of the surveys with the researcher present provided the opportunity for students to ask questions, and be questioned on the ease of completing the survey. This identified questions that required rewording; a further pilot of the survey identified that no students needed to ask questions. This strategy was thus able to safeguard against this potential limitation. Teachers supervising the survey were provided the opportunity to view the survey beforehand, and were briefed on the focus of the research and questions contained within the survey. Following the conduct of the survey the researcher asked for feedback from supervisors to identify any issues that may arise; none were identified.

A further limitation of using survey is the difficulty in confronting specific social issues and prior attainment. Therefore, specific social issues and prior attainment have been omitted from the survey.

Among the limitations concerning document analysis are the potential difficulty in retrieving the documents, the biased selection of documents and the reporting bias of the author (Yin, 2014). Another criticism of documentation as evidence in case study is the potential for over-reliance (Yin, 2014). This research used document analysis as supplementary to the other forms of data collection to corroborate (or dispel) evidence found by other sources.

A criticism of the interview technique is that it is “persistently slippery, unstable and ambiguous from person to person, from situation to situation, from time to time” (Scheurich, 1995, p. 62). Other weaknesses of the interview technique is the potential for bias due to poor design of questions, response bias, incomplete recollection and the interviewee expressing what the interviewer wants to hear (Yin, 2014). The researcher attempted to mitigate these weaknesses by gathering
feedback from pilot school stakeholders on the suitability of the questions and also by conducting pilot interviews and focus groups using the voice memo recording and transcription service. The interview questions employed an open style of questioning with probe questions to gain further information as appropriate. Interviewees were reassured that there were no right or wrong answers, and were encouraged to provide their real opinions and experiences of the phenomena under study.

A limitation in the use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software, such as NVivo used in this research, is the cost of the software and the ability of the researcher to use the software. To counteract this limitation, a grant was sourced and the researcher purchased and undertook training in the use of NVivo.

A limitation of the researcher being a key instrument in the research process is that that the researcher has to guard against over-familiarity, complacency and the intrusion of personal bias and opinions into the research process (Edwards, 1999). In this research the researcher endeavoured to be methodologically self-conscious, by being aware that personal perspective may influence the choice of coding method. However, according to Blair (2015) this potential bias is not one that generally needs to be corrected in qualitative research, and may be seen as beneficial as the analyst is able to use their unique expertise and skills.

3.3.6 Ethical considerations

This research is guided by the principles of respect, justice and beneficence. This research adheres to the Australian Catholic University protocols for ethical research and the Dioceses Conduct of Research Policies. Prior to undertaking this study the researcher obtained approval from the Australian Catholic University Ethics Committee and the Directors of Schools for the target diocese (Appendix H, approval number N2011 83). Permission was obtained from the principals of the seven secondary schools for the collection of data from their Year 11 students, parents and school staff. In each authorisation letter the context, purpose and design of data collection for the research was outlined. Letters were also given to each participant invited. Additionally each letter noted that a participant could withdraw from the research at any time, or for any part.
The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) specifies the values and principles of ethical conduct in research. These values are respect for human beings, merit of research, and justice, integrity and beneficence. These have been put in place to shape the relationship between researcher and participants as one of trust, mutual responsibility and ethical equality (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2015). The merit of this research was in the aim of improving opportunities for future students in VETiS. The integrity of this research is in its design, attention to participant privacy and ethical considerations.

Justice relates to potential exploitation of participants and that processes are fair and benefits are fairly disseminated. Justice, referring to equal share and fairness (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001), underpins the design of this research. All schools in the case boundary had the opportunity to participate in the research. This aimed to gather data fairly without bias to a specific school or community. Student cohorts comprise differing students with differing needs; all students from Year 11 were invited to participate with school and parental approval. This included those who may be marginalised, such as students with special needs or from non-English speaking backgrounds. Principles of equity and justice applied to all student participants; additional support to make participation accessible was made available.

Beneficence refers to ensuring the likely benefit of the research is able to justify any risks of harm or discomfort to participants and was of particular importance in this research. The safety of students and school staff was of paramount importance in this study. Therefore, all research data collection strategies were undertaken within the case schools and all participants were familiar with the environment.

Respect includes the recognition of the rights of the participants, including the right to being informed about the study, the right to choose to participate and the right to withdraw from the study without penalty (Orb et al., 2001). The privacy of participants was respected. Privacy protocols included anonymity in survey responses, and coding in interviews/focus groups, instead of names—this mechanism of coding does not store data linking any names to codes. To maximise the anonymity of both schools and students the school sites are a mix of pilot and site schools. In consideration of the case as a whole, all case sites were included,
however for comparison some information may be specific to a particular site for the purpose of noting patterns with sites or roles.

3.4 Overview of research design

The research was designed to consider the two major issues of the research question, being participation in and implementation of VETiS. Within each issue participants and data collection strategies were purposefully selected to maximise the relevance and comparison of data gathered. The research used the case study approach, incorporating four case sites and three pilot sites with interviews, surveys, document analysis and focus groups as data gathering strategies.

The planning of the research considered the requirement for trustworthiness and the value of undertaking such research. Triangulation of data was incorporated into the research design and into the range of data gathering strategies implemented, which included surveys, interviews, focus groups and document analysis. Dependability of data was essential in order to ensure the accuracy of data and its applicability to other situations and contexts. Consequently the data gathering strategies and profiles of participants were similar for each site.

Research is a moral and ethical endeavour; this research was committed to ensuring that the interests of those participating in the study were not jeopardised or harmed as a result of the research (Halai, 2006, p. 5). All participation was voluntary and the identity of all participants remains confidential. Both deductive and inductive approaches were adopted to analyse data. Policy documents from the Australian Catholic University and both dioceses provided guidelines to ensure the research maintained legal and ethical standards. Transparency of research was promoted in the information, given to all stakeholders and participants, as to the nature, purpose, method and reporting of the research being undertaken.

The next four chapters present the information generated from each case site school for each of the specific research questions. Chapter 8 consolidates the findings in a cross-site comparison to explore the variations across school data, thereby providing insight into the main research question and understandings of the research problem.
Table 3-7 shows the research design overview.

**Table 3-7**  
**Research design overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Research Question</th>
<th>What influences student and school leadership decision-making regarding selection and offering of VETiS courses in Catholic secondary schools?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific Research Questions</td>
<td>Data gathering strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?</td>
<td>1: Focus groups school staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?</td>
<td>2: Interviews students &amp; parents, and key school staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Phase 1: PRE-DATA COLLECTION (Survey and interview construction) at 3 pilot schools in 2 dioceses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Staff school and system staff/leadership interviews.</td>
<td>VETiS coordinators (5). Career advisers (5). Principals (5); curriculum coordinators (5). System leadership (5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: School subject information review.</td>
<td>Each school (5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 2: EXPLORATORY (Survey administration and data collection) at 4 schools in 2 dioceses</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 3: ANALYSIS AND UNDERSTANDINGS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Presentation of data.</td>
<td>Data presented and explored, codes to concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Final analysis.</td>
<td>Interpretation of the research data into themes and conclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Discussion of understandings.</td>
<td>Major themes and questions presented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4: Findings—Case Site School 1

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from Case Site School 1 (CSS1). The first section describes the school, participation in VETiS and the leadership history of the school (Section 4.2). The following sections present the research analysis and data coding which initially stemmed from influences identified in the conceptual framework synthesised in Chapter 2. Codes generated from the literature review (see Table 3-4, Table 3-5, Table 3-6) were linked to specific questions which identified themes to explain the influence which affected the implementation and uptake of VETiS (Sections 4.4, 4.5, 4.6).

- Section 4.4 discusses specific Research Question 1: What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?
- Section 4.5 discusses specific Research Question 2: What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
- Section 4.6 discusses specific Research Question 3: How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?

4.2 CSS1 school context

CSS1 is located in rural NSW and is a regional comprehensive coeducational Catholic secondary school with an enrolment of between 550-650 students. At the time of this study this school had an above average Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)\(^5\), according to the My School website of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA n.d., 2013). The ICSEA score is made up of student factors such as parent education and occupation, together with school factors of geographic location and proportion of indigenous students. The school had a lower than average socio-economic status

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\(^5\) The index of community socio-educational advantage (ICSEA) was created by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) specifically to enable meaningful comparisons of schools drawing on demographic data.
(SES) for non-government NSW schools (Department of Education and Training, 2018). SES is a measure of a school community’s economic and social position in relation to other schools. Although these are 2018 data they are indicative of the profile of the school at the time of the study in 2012. Table 4-1 outlines the profile of CSS1.

Table 4-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSS1 school profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language background Other than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Average for NSW non-government schools is 107)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (ACARA n.d., 2013; Department of Education and Training, 2018)

CSS1 has a history of medium to high VETiS participation, ranging from 55% in 2005 to 27% in 2011, (Table 4-2). Participation in VETiS peaked in 2005 when 55% of all students in Stage 6 participated in the only VETiS subject implemented. In 2011, 27% of all students in Stage 6 participated in the three VETiS subjects implemented. Implementation of VETiS courses increased, although participation rates declined.

In 2013, this school conducted three different VETiS courses and student participation represented 31% of all Stage 6 enrolments (NSW Board of Studies, 2013). This participation rate is consistent with both state (32%) and Catholic school (34%) participation for that year (Catholic Schools NSW, 2019; NSW Board of Studies, 2013).
Table 4-2

CSS1 implementation and participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Year 11</th>
<th>Year 12</th>
<th>All Stage 6</th>
<th>Year 12 No. of VETiS courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the nine-year period shown in Table 4-2, CSS1 experienced three changes in school and VETiS leadership. Three principals have led the school. Three VETiS coordinators have supported implementation and participation. The school leaving age increased to 17 in 2010 following government legislation. Three changes in career advisory processes occurred during this time. Staff interviewed indicated that these changes influenced the variation of VETiS experienced over this period (Tess, Tansy TFG1, Kris, Karri, KI1, 30/10/2012).

The role of the VETiS coordinator is influential in representing VETiS at leadership meetings, promoting VETiS within the school and supporting VETiS staff with compliance issues. CSS1 allocates the VETiS coordination duties to the Technical and Applied Studies (TAS) coordinator. The TAS coordinator role attracts coordinator payment plus time allowance, with the VETiS component given time allowance only. Having a champion for VETiS in the school was seen as an influence on the way VETiS is viewed by the school community, supported by school leadership and the popularity of VETiS among students and the school community, “VETiS needs an injection of passion and enthusiasm” (Karri, KI1, 30/10/2012). The coordinator changed in 2005. The original coordinator was very passionate about promoting the subjects and about students experiencing VETiS. However, interviews with school staff revealed a belief amongst some that the coordinator current at the time of the study probably saw VETiS as a TAFE dominion and
requiring too much extra work for teachers in meeting compliance requirements (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012).

CSS1 has experienced variations in participation and implementation rates between 2005 and 2013. During analysis of CSS1 data, the changes in leadership and the school leaving age were considered in order to identify if these changes could explain the fluctuations in VETiS participation and implementation of courses.

Data collection for CSS1 involved document analysis, student and parent surveys, a focus group with VETiS teachers and semi-structured interviews with school key personnel. Table 4-3 shows the codes used related to each data collection strategy.

Table 4-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Group</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Student survey</td>
<td>Tess, Tansy, Tom, Tammy, Tabitha, Therese, Trudy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parent survey</td>
<td>Kris, Karri, Karl, Kim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS Teachers</td>
<td>TFG Focus group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Key Personnel (principal, curriculum coordinator, career adviser, VETiS coordinator)</td>
<td>KI Interview</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Document</td>
<td>Document</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Analysis

The research analysis and data coding initially stemmed from influences identified in the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2. Other codes were developed inductively by an iterative process involving pattern identification as outlined in Chapter 3. Codes were linked to specific questions. This enabled the identification of themes to explain behaviours and considerations at this school in relation to the implementation and uptake of VETiS. A synopsis of findings is presented in Sections
4.4.4, 4.5.4 and 4.6.4 which outline the codes and emergent themes found in the data.

4.4 CSS1 Specific Research Question 1

Data revealed three themes emerging in response to the first Specific Research Question, *what influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?* These themes are presented in Table 4-4 and are further discussed in this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Understandings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4.4.1 Information to students and parent advice | • School processes for disseminating subject information.  
• How VETiS programs address parent expectation. |
| 4.4.2 Reasons for subject selection | • Differing reasons different subjects.  
• Social aspects of schooling.  
• Differences in understandings of teachers/leadership and students.  
• School demographics. |
| 4.4.3 Enablers and barriers for VETiS subject choice | • VETiS  
• SBAT  
• TVET |

4.4.1 Information to students and parental influence

Two aspects influence student and parental decisions concerning VETiS subject choice. They are:

• School processes for disseminating HSC subject selection information; and  
• How VETiS programs address parent expectations.
4.4.1.1 School processes for disseminating HSC subject selection information

Year 10 to 11 subject information practices offer students and parents information about the Higher School Certificate, ATAR and subject selection. These include information evenings, subject handbooks, and teacher counselling. School leadership personnel decide how these practices are conducted and by whom, as well as the comprehensiveness of information for each subject area.

School leadership personnel stated that a general “information evening is held for students going from Year 10 to Year 11, and after this KLA [Key Learning Area] coordinators are available to speak with students and parents regarding different subject areas” (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012). Students are offered one-to-one counselling on subject choices. Teachers also present to students about each subject during school hours. A “vast” amount of information is given to parents and students in the subject information handbook (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012). Students are encouraged to discuss subjects with teachers; one teacher argued that it is “how well each teacher sells their subject” that influences student choice (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012). However, it was indicated that the information evenings were presented by the deputy principal and that any opportunity for a “good solid sales pitch” for VETiS was “not evident … I’d like to make a pitch at those information nights” (Tom, TFG1, 30/10/2012).

Another important influence on how VETiS subjects are valued in schools concerns the teachers who counsel students on subject choices. It appears that not all non-VETiS teachers offered accurate information to students about VETiS. Indeed, claims were made that some teachers caused confusion amongst students regarding VETiS subjects (Tansy, TFG1, 30/10/2012). There was little opportunity for VETiS teachers to promote VETiS subjects to students and parents, “we need to be allowed to promote our courses better” (Tess, TFG1, 30/10/2012).

Formal school processes at CSS1 which had been implemented in order to disseminate information about the HSC and subject selection involved a general information night and written information at CSS1. However teachers believed that VETiS could be further promoted if the opportunity was made available to present at these information nights.
4.4.1.2 How VETiS programs address parent expectation

Parent expectation influences the advice they give to their children regarding subject choice. The advice parents give, according to school personnel, may be based on their own experiences of secondary school education, which subjects they enjoyed or which they felt were useful. There was consensus among school personnel who argued that some parents have specific career pathways in mind for their child which influences the advice given. For example, one claimed:

The parent’s advice comes from past experiences, her own experiences and what she thinks is valuable together with the direction she wants her daughter to go in. (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012)

It was further assumed that many CSS1 parents expect their children to progress to university, particularly those parents who had gained a degree (10–15%). Moreover, other parents hoped their child “would be the first member of the family to earn a degree” (Karri, KI3 30/10/2012). However, it was acknowledged that there were constraints on meeting these expectations, as Karri commented:

Unfortunately, the reality is few students from this school go directly to university due to the costs involved and no local university options, yet the ATAR remains important”. (Karri, KI3 30/10/2012)

Realistic expectations by parents were enhanced by school parent/teacher/student conferences at each transition to the next year at CSS1. It is through these conferences that parent expectations for their child’s academic future were further informed. An example offered by Karri noted that “in Year 7 the parents might think their child is going to be a doctor, but they realise by the time they get to Year 11 that is probably not realistic for their child” (Karri, K13, 30/10/2012).

Parents were primary advisers of their children at CSS1. Parent advice was often motivated by personal experience, hopes and aspirations they held for their child. However, in some cases the hopes and aspirations of the parent did not align with the goals and abilities of their child.
4.4.2 Reasons for subject choices

In phase 1 of the research process, a student survey (N=22) was conducted at CSS1 where students indicated their subject choices and ranked how influential each of the listed reasons were for each subject chosen. The list of reasons was developed from interviews and surveys with teachers, parents and students in the pilot phase of this research. The ranking used a Likert like scale ranging from extremely important (4) to not important (0). Table 4-5 shows median scores of students’ reasons for subject choice at CSS1.

Table 4-5
Median scores for responses for subject choice CSS1

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Genuinely interested in this subject</td>
<td>3.33 3.57 4.00 3.80 2.71 2.19 2.90 3.57 3.80 2.88 3.25 3.56 3.00 3.50 3.75</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 - I am good at this subject</td>
<td>3.00 3.43 4.00 3.60 2.76 2.52 3.00 3.14 3.60 2.75 3.00 3.22 2.75 3.38 3.50</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 - This subject is good for my ATAR</td>
<td>3.00 2.71 4.00 3.40 3.32 2.95 3.41 3.12 3.20 3.00 2.00 3.22 3.00 3.14 2.25</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 - This subject is a pre-requisite for future study</td>
<td>2.00 2.00 4.00 3.60 2.76 1.62 2.86 2.93 2.40 2.38 1.50 3.11 2.67 3.00 2.88</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>2.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 - This subject is useful for career intent</td>
<td>2.00 2.29 4.00 3.60 2.81 1.38 2.86 3.21 3.00 2.38 2.00 3.22 2.86 3.14 2.75</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 - This subject will give me skills for my personal life</td>
<td>2.67 3.33 4.00 3.60 2.90 1.85 2.95 2.64 2.60 3.00 2.50 3.00 3.14 3.29 2.75</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 - This subject looks good on my HSC</td>
<td>2.67 2.17 4.00 3.40 3.05 2.91 3.18 3.14 3.00 3.00 2.00 3.33 3.38 3.00 2.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 - This subject is good for my resume</td>
<td>2.67 2.83 4.00 3.40 2.90 2.09 3.09 3.14 3.00 2.50 2.00 3.22 3.13 3.25 2.75</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 - My friends are in this class</td>
<td>1.67 1.50 1.00 1.80 1.43 1.57 1.67 1.57 1.80 2.25 1.50 1.89 2.38 2.00 2.00</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 - I like the teacher</td>
<td>1.67 2.17 1.00 1.40 1.95 1.95 2.32 2.00 2.20 2.50 1.25 2.56 2.75 2.00 2.00</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>2.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 - It was the only subject on the line that was suitable to me</td>
<td>1.67 1.00 1.00 1.00 1.90 2.18 2.00 1.43 2.00 2.00 1.75 2.11 2.57 1.43 1.50</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 - This subject was easier than other subjects on this line</td>
<td>1.67 1.00 1.00 1.00 1.52 1.48 1.76 1.50 1.80 1.88 1.87 2.00 1.86 1.29 1.50</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 - This subject might help me get a job</td>
<td>2.67 3.00 4.00 3.60 3.09 1.71 3.14 3.31 3.00 2.13 1.50 3.11 2.86 3.25 2.75</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.71</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - Done this subject before and enjoyed it</td>
<td>2.33 3.14 2.00 2.00 2.67 1.90 2.82 3.00 3.60 1.63 2.75 3.44 2.14 3.50 3.25</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 - Subject has a reputation for achieving high results in the HSC exam</td>
<td>2.00 2.00 2.00 2.00 2.52 2.57 2.52 2.50 2.80 2.13 1.00 2.89 2.50 2.38 2.00</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.35</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-5 shows that, in each case, subject choice was influenced by all of the fifteen reasons to varying degrees. Diversity is evident in the reasons given for influencing...
VETiS subject choice, compared to non-VETiS subjects. Figure 4-1 diagrammatically compares the influences impacting choice of VETiS and non-VETiS subjects at CSS1. A ranking of 3.0 or above on the four-point Likert scale (important/extremely important) was deemed a major reason for choosing that subject. Rankings of less than 1 had little influence over subject choices.

![Figure 4-1 CSS1 reasons for subject choice](image)

In summary, the major influences on students’ decision-making at CSS1 are:

- 1—Genuine interest (VETiS 3.68/non-VETiS 3.19);
- 2—Being good at this subject (VETiS 3.51/non-VETiS 3.06);
- 3—Subject is good for ATAR (VETiS 3.28/non-VETiS 2.98);
- 6—Skills for personal life (VETiS 3.40/non-VETiS 2.78);
- 7—Subject is good for resume (VETiS 3.23/non-VETiS 2.82); and
- 13—Might help to get a job (VETiS 3.32/non-VETiS 2.71).
In summary, the reasons less likely to influence VETiS subject choice at CSS1 are:

- 9—Friends being in the class (VETiS 1.49/non-VETiS 1.82);
- 10—Liking the teacher (VETiS 1.56/non-VETiS 1.82);
- 11—Only suitable subject available on the timetable line (VETiS 1.17/non-VETiS 1.90); and
- 12—Easier than other subjects on the line (VETiS 1.17/non-VETiS 1.67).

The evidence suggests students chose VETiS subjects because of genuine interest, its value to an ATAR score, because they were good at the subject, its use for post-school employment and because the skills being taught were useable in personal life (Table 4-5, Figure 4-1). Genuine interest was important or extremely important to students in all subject areas including VETiS. The influences of ATAR contribution, obtaining skills for personal life, the subject being good for a resume and it being able to help get a job ranged from being important to extremely important for VETiS subject selection, whereas in non-VETiS subject selection those influences ranged from being a little important to important.

Students were influenced to a lesser degree by friends being in the class, liking the teacher, the subject being easier or it being the only suitable subject on the timetable ‘line’, for all subject areas. These reasons were less than a little important for all subject areas; interestingly students ranked these reasons lower for VETiS subjects than non-VETiS.

Teachers and leadership expressed different views about the reasons for VETiS subject choices. Teachers and leadership believed that students chose VETiS because it was easier academically than other subjects “for the kids at the lower end of the academic scale” (Karl, KI2, 30/10/2012). Some school staff believed that the choices made by peers influenced subject choice more highly than was evident in student survey responses. This belief was evidenced in, for example, a comment made by one teacher: “They look at who else is going to pick it. Are you going to pick it mate? No, okay, I won't pick it either.” (Tess, TFG1, 30/10/2012). Liking the teacher was identified as a major reason for subject choice by school staff, as indicated by one comment: “kids are still choosing subjects because of the teacher they like or don't like” (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012). As can be seen in Table 4-5 and
Figure 4-1 the reasons of the subject being easier, having friends in class and liking the teacher were denied by students as being a major influence.

The difference in perspectives among students, teachers and leadership regarding the reasons for VETiS subject choice is interesting to this research. This phenomenon is worthy of further exploration in future research activities.

4.4.3 Enablers and barriers for VETiS subject choice

In the next sections, enablers and barriers for VETiS subject selection are discussed. These are shown in Table 4-6.

Table 4-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enablers that could encourage students to choose VETiS</th>
<th>Barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Student demographic.</td>
<td>1. Confusion about VETiS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Realistic Industry appeal.</td>
<td>2. Resourcing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Promoted to all students.</td>
<td>3. VETiS leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Leadership support of SBATs.</td>
<td>5. Similarity to traditional subjects.</td>
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<td>7. Work placement.</td>
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<td>8. VETiS student stereotype.</td>
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<td>9. ATAR restrictions.</td>
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<td>10. Cost of TVET.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.4.3.1 Enablers that could encourage students to choose VETiS

Six enabling influences were identified from staff interviews for choosing VETiS: these are now discussed. Enabling influences support VETiS subject choice. The first enabler for VETiS subject selection was the student demographic at CSS1. Many students at CSS1 come from farming backgrounds, and intend working on the family farm, post-school. Consequently according to one teacher, “skills gained through VETiS subjects are attractive to them because they appreciate how they
could utilise those skills in their future” (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012). This was not reported in student survey data.

The second enabler was that students appreciated the equivalence of VETiS courses to industry standards. For example one teacher said that “…students chose VETiS when the subject looked like a real industry course, not just an extension of an ordinary school course” (Tansy, TFG1, 30/10/2012). Tess reaffirmed this by indicating that “realistic local career outcomes” were considered by students when they made VETiS subject choices (Tess, TFG1, 30/10/2012). This was confirmed by student survey responses which indicated that VETiS usefulness in gaining post school employment was a reason behind subject choice (figure 4-1).

The third enabling influence, according to teachers, is that VETiS subjects were promoted as “suitable to all students” irrespective of whether students were academically-oriented or likely to follow a trade-based career (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012). Kris further emphasised that CSS1 had “lots of really academic kids who want to do something practical”. Students at CSS1 are more likely to choose VETiS for a range of reasons according to teachers, these reasons being genuine interest, employment opportunities and to be able to study in classes with their friends (Tess, Tansy, Tom, FG1, 30/10/2012). However, one school respondent indicated that students who were less likely to go to university were more likely to be advised “unofficially” to do VETiS subjects: “we look at a pathway for them to get into employment” (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012).

A fourth enabler at CSS1 is support from non-VETiS teachers for the students in VETiS classes. One staff member acknowledged that while having students away from class on work placement was challenging, non-VETiS teachers were still supportive. She said:

> When we have work placement, the school may have 1, 16 or 20 kids out at one time. Some kids are doing up to four VETiS subjects as they don’t want an ATAR. It impacts on other teachers as they know those kids are going to be missing from their classes for weeks at a time. These teachers put in the effort to know they have the work they are missing and they have the assessment tasks to do. Teachers just get more and more creative on how to give them their work. (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012)
A supportive attitude by school leadership is an enabler for SBATs selection. The promotion and flexibility offered to students interested in SBATs at CSS1 had resulted in 5–10 students undertaking SBATs each year. Teachers of SBAT students had acted as enablers by being creative in the way they help students catch up on work missed. When the teachers of other subjects were not supportive a barrier was created: “…a student’s time away from school was a potential barrier because other subjects could be affected if teachers are not supportive” (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012).

Similarly, school staff indicated that promotion of TVET provided evidence that school leadership were willing to expand student VETiS subject choices through external delivery. The close proximity of the TAFE campus was an enabling influence as students were not delayed between classes due to distance, “when the TAFE is that close they want to do those courses” (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012). Student demographic, industry appeal and suitability of VETiS for all students contributed to VETiS subject selection at CSS1.

Six influences enabled VETiS subject selection at CSS1. They were student demographic, realistic industry appeal, promotion as suited to all students, support from non-VETiS teachers, leadership support of SBATs, promotion and proximity of TVET.

4.4.3.2 Barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS

Data gathered from interviews with school staff revealed nine issues that were considered as barriers to students choosing VETiS (Table 4-6). Barriers discourage VETiS subject choice. Each of these is now discussed.

The first barrier emerged from confusion and lack of understanding about VETiS subjects by non-VETiS staff, parents and students. This confusion extended to the relationship between industry and VETiS courses, the nature of competency-based training and the value of nationally-accredited VET qualifications. This lack of understanding was offered as an explanation as to why teachers or parents were less inclined to encourage students to consider VETiS selection: “Very few people talk about VETiS at all except for VETiS teachers. A lot of people don't know exactly what it is or how it works” (Tess, TFG1, 30/10/2012). Consequently, as information
nights fail to make room for presentations by those who fully understand VETiS, there are few occasions to market VETiS subjects.

The second barrier concerns the provision of resources. VETiS courses require industry skills to be developed through realistic projects and activities. The provision of adequate resourcing and room size influences the numbers in class enrolment and the capacity to undertake realistic industry projects. Consequently, lack of resourcing was identified as a barrier if relevant industry equipment and the space to undertake activities were not available. Space to undertake projects is important if such projects are to be completed over a period of time, as well as provide the capacity to demonstrate quality and motivate student interest. At CSS1, the relatively small size of many classrooms limits the enrolment of students. Consequently, other students interested in enrolling in VETiS were unable to. In addition, according to school staff members, participation was “restricted to the number of students that were permitted into specified VETiS due to rules for compliance, training packages specify access to resources per student and learning space requirements” (Karl, KI2, 30/10/2012). Consequently, the small room restriction frustrated teachers, limited numbers and diminished students’ enjoyment of VETiS.

The third barrier which hindered VETiS selection concerns the lack of commitment by some VETiS leaders to advocate on behalf of VETiS. According to one teacher: “…the original coordinator was very passionate about selling the subjects but the current coordinator probably sees VETiS as a TAFE dominion” (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012). Industry training has historically been delivered in TAFE colleges, not in secondary schools, which may influence opinions and perceptions of where VETiS education supposedly should belong. The passion and belief of the individual leading VETiS may influence how staff and students perceive these subjects and how they are valued in secondary education. Teachers believed that a lack of enthusiasm by VETiS teachers had a negative effect on the promotion, advocacy and selection of VETiS. One respondent stated that “VETiS needs an injection of passion and enthusiasm, some see the paperwork as being very challenging” (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012). She also said:
…we have many students who would choose those areas if we had some staff who were more passionate and enthusiastic about their subject and were willing to “put in”. Students vote with their feet and are not picking the subjects because of the teacher. (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012)

The fourth barrier concerns the extra work required and subsequent stress VETiS teachers are placed under as a result of external audit requirements. The nationally-accredited nature of VETiS delivery requires scrutiny from the national regulator, ASQA, for compliance against national standards. This allows all certificates issued to be recognised and gives employers the confidence that persons holding these certificates have the skills specified. This external compliance requirement and the evidentiary documentation required had negative influences on the willingness and passion of some teachers and coordinators. Consensus from school staff was evident around the same issue, for example one stakeholder said:

Since ASQA’s inception people have started to get nervous, institutions have had to get serious about VETiS otherwise they might lose the right to operate. Teachers have been disillusioned with the paperwork, they don’t know what is right or wrong anymore. One staff member said they don’t want to start programming for next year because he is unsure if what he does will be adequate or not. Another teacher looked at what we have had to do for audit and shaking his head about the volume of paper that we now have to deal with. (Karl, KI2, 30/10/2012)

A fifth barrier was the similarity of VETiS subjects to traditional vocational subjects. VETiS subjects delivered in schools are often those similar to traditional subjects: hospitality and food technology, or construction and wood work. School leadership chose these VETiS subjects because appropriate resources/facilities already existed and suitable teachers were on staff. Classroom and resource requirements were similar to current traditional subjects being delivered and teachers had the benchmark requirements for VETiS retraining. Karri indicated that school subject implementation decisions initially stemmed from teacher qualifications and availability of resources. Teachers still hold their qualifications in traditional subjects therefore their continued willingness to teach VETiS (or not) is important for continued VETiS at CSS1. Consequently, the competition between VETiS and traditional subjects for student enrolments and teacher willingness to teach was a barrier. For example, one teacher said:
We have gone back to the traditional timber subject even though the VETiS construction pathway is better for our students. This is because the teachers directed and horded the students into timber and not VETiS construction. They did this because they would attract the same type of students, and the level of paperwork involved in timber was much lower. Also if they taught construction the teacher would have had to maintain industry currency and have to do all the extra work involved in VETiS. I doubt if the teacher saw the extra work in VETiS was worth it. (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012)

A sixth barrier to the advocacy of VETiS was the lack of continued enthusiasm and commitment by teachers and leadership. Initially teachers were excited about VETiS implementation, and keen to undergo re-training for accreditation, giving evidence of commitment to the vocational benefits of VETiS. The waning of this enthusiasm by some staff, due to compliance issues, negatively influences teacher commitment to VETiS education, according to some staff members. “Construction was interesting in that they have gone back to timber. I think this was due to the paperwork” (Karl, KI2, 1/12/Ex12).

The seventh barrier was related to how work placement was an impediment to subject choice for some students. Each VETiS subject chosen mandates 35 hours of work placement in each year of study. Absences from classes due to work placement affected other subjects and dampened the enthusiasm of non-VETiS teachers towards VETiS. Some teachers found student absence disruptive to classes and VETiS students were required to catch up on work missed in their own time, which was more difficult for students who were less academic, according to one teacher (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012).

The perception and subsequent stereotyping of students who study VETiS was an eighth barrier. For example, one teacher said: “...the perception is that less academically able students choose VETiS, which doesn’t encourage more academic students to choose it” (Tess, TFG1, 30/10/2012). Consequently, the way a student sees themselves academically may be a barrier to VETiS selection. Seemingly, if a student believes that they have high academic ability and that the VETiS classes are for those who have lower ability, they are less inclined to choose these subjects. Students want to feel like they fit in; their social standing among their friends is
important and they may not choose VETiS subjects if their friends have a negative view of the type of student who studies VETiS.

The ninth barrier identified in the data relates to restrictions set by ATAR. ATAR limits the number of VETiS subjects which are able to be selected. One VETiS subject is allowed if students want an ATAR, as was confirmed in discussion with a teacher: “they can do one, because one counts towards their HSC ATAR” (Karri, KI1, 30/10/2012). The one-subject rule for ATAR contribution restricts choice based on interest; the subjects having this rule are categorised as B courses which can impact on reputation and value perceptions of VETiS and be a barrier.

A tenth barrier related to TVET and the costs involved. TAFE charges fees to students for studying TVET; there was consensus that these fees are a barrier due to cost and paying capacity of parents. As parents already pay school fees to attend the school, additional fees may be prohibitive. The diocese had endeavoured to reduce this barrier by subsidising TVET fees, although there remained “a partial fee charged to parents for TVET in addition to school fees, which is a barrier to some students” (Kris, KI1, Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012).

Ten barriers to VETiS subject selection were identified at CSS1. They were: confusion about VETiS, resources, workload, similarity with traditional subjects, lack of enthusiastic teachers, work placement, student stereotype, ATAR restrictions and the cost of TVET.

4.4.4 Summary Specific Research Question 1

Table 4-7 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS1 and Specific Research Question 1 that asked, what are the beliefs that influence students/parents when they make decisions concerning choosing VETiS subjects?
Table 4-7

CSS1 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School processes and structure of planned subject information dissemination</td>
<td>• Information evening with parents; subject handbook; teachers advising; interviews; information sessions during school; peer influence; parent advice; career advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How VETiS programs address parent expectation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for subject choice</td>
<td>• Useful for career intent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Might help to get a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Good for resume.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Skills for personal life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Genuine interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Good for ATAR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling factors influencing subject choice for VETiS</td>
<td>• Student demographic; realistic industry appeal; suitable to all students; support from non-VETiS teachers; leadership support for SBATs; promotion and proximity of TVET.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors which create a barrier for VETiS subject choice who, what, why</td>
<td>• Confusion about ATAR from other teachers; resources; VETiS leadership; extra work for teachers; similarity with traditional subjects; lack of teacher enthusiasm; work placement; VETiS student stereotype; TVET costs; ATAR restrictions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 CSS1 Specific Research Question 2

An analysis of the staff interview and focus group data generated the following issues which structure the presentation of findings for CSS1, Specific Research Question 2, *what information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?*

4.5.1 Subject advisory processes

There are many advisory processes which guide students and their parents in subject choices at CSS1, including both formal and informal practices. Formal processes involved a general information evening with parents and each student was issued with a written subject handbook. Informal processes involved interviews being available with a staff member to provide career advice: “we haven’t actually got a
careers allocation, students get the bulk of the information from the resources in the library and then can make an appointment with the staff person doing careers” (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012). Teachers felt that students had ample opportunity to speak with subject teachers, “they have plenty of opportunity to talk to the individual subject teachers and get a feel for what they are doing in that subject, you know at lunch and at recess” (Tess, FG1, 30/10/2012).

Table 4-8 shows the themes and understandings for Specific Research Question 2.

Table 4-8

CSS1 understandings, Specific Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key themes</th>
<th>Understandings about information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4.5.1 School subject advisory processes | • School practices to guide subject selection and marketing VETiS.  
• Which practices most valued by students.  
• Career advice.  
  o Advice and advisers for and against VETiS. |
| 4.5.2 Advisers | • Influence of key advisers.  
• Motivation of advisers, and Type and extent of advice. |
| 4.5.3 Written information | Subject Information Handbook:  
• Information about VETiS:  
  o Amount of information.  
  o Language used.  
  o VETiS costs and rules. |

School processes offered subject advice and information. Students indicated on the survey that they valued individual/personal contact more highly than advice given through group presentations; this is shown in Figure 4-2. In particular, they valued individual interviews with the school career adviser (both with and without parents being present) more than other experiences of gaining subject information and advice. Group presentations from subject teachers or from previous students sharing their experiences were less important to students.
Specifically helpful subject selection advice about whether to study VETiS subjects or not came from teachers, career advisers or parents, shown in Table 4-9. Over 20% of students surveyed were advised to study VETiS; this advice came from parents, teachers and career advisers. The advice included VETiS subjects being useful in post-school life, offering valuable skills and giving enjoyment. In contrast, 4% of students were advised not to study VETiS. The advice not to study VETiS concerned the value of VETiS in the ATAR score, and came from parents and teachers. This was identified in free text responses in the student surveys. Table 4-9 shows the percentages of students given advice and whether they chose to act on that advice.
Table 4-9

CSS1 student survey response advice specific to VETiS subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject advice specific to VETiS subjects</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Nature of advice given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students who were advised to study VETiS and did.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teachers from another subject.</td>
<td>VETiS is enjoyable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who were advised to study VETiS and did NOT.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Career adviser; parents; teachers.</td>
<td>Skills learned are useful; good for career; enjoyed a similar subject; would do well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students advised NOT to study VETiS and did NOT.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Parents; teachers.</td>
<td>VETiS is not as good for your ATAR if you want to go to university.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students advised NOT to do a VETiS subject and DID.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-3 shows each subject area and student acknowledgement of advice provided for each subject chosen. Of interest is that students received less subject advice about VETiS than other subjects.

Figure 4-3 CSS1 subject advice, all subjects
4.5.2 Advisers

Parents, teachers and the career advisers were key advisers available to students in the process of subject choice. The type, extent and motivation underpinning the advice varied.

According to school staff, subject advice by parents was an important contribution and influential in the subject decision-making process. Half of the students surveyed acknowledged that their parents had provided advice for subjects they had chosen. Many parents provided advice motivated by their own expectations of their children’s future. One teacher in response to a discussion about parents argued, “The parent will say, no, you are going to do this and that’s your pathway” (Karl, KI2, 30/10/2012). Moreover, their advice was influenced by their prior experiences of education and consequently they emphasised the traditional subject areas, with which they were familiar. For example, one teacher said:

The parents who have degrees encourage their children to go forth and accumulate degrees. VETiS is not seen as academically rigorous enough to get a student there by parents, and they will advise against it. (Tansy, TFG1, 30/10/2012)

Not all parents were actively involved in subject decisions. Indeed, it was estimated that: “…50% of parents would have some sort of discussion with their child about subject choice and other parents are more blasé” (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012). Consequently, students sought advice concerning subject choice elsewhere.

In contrast, and not surprisingly, teachers were the primary advisers for subject choices. One teacher believed that students who were advised by teachers to study VETiS at CSS1 were more likely to be non-academic students (Karri, KI3 30/10/2012). Teacher advice could either promote or discourage VETiS selection. The rationale underpinning teacher advice offers an insight to their motivation. While most teachers’ advice tended to have focused on the welfare of the student, there were instances when this may not have been the case. One teacher said that teachers wanting to teach a particular subject may promote their subject over another in order to protect their own job interests (Karl, KI2, 30/10/2012). Another teacher reinforced this by saying that:
The subjects that kids were directed or horded into were non-VETiS course Y rather than VETiS course X. This was done because X and Y are fairly similar in nature, or you’d be attracting similar type kids. The paperwork involved in X less than VETiS and the teacher doesn’t want to do the extra paperwork involved.

(Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012)

Career adviser guidance through individual interviews is another source of subject advice valued by students; see Figure 4-3. Career advice at CSS1 is given by the curriculum coordinator. It was claimed by a key staff member that the career adviser position at CSS1 did not have a time allocation: “they have a specific person but don’t have specific time, and it is one of the areas we need to improve” (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012).

4.5.3 Written information

The subject information handbook includes detailed information concerning each VETiS subject offered. It was presented using templates from the then Board of Studies (now NESA). Because specific information to prospective students for Vocational Education and Training is a requirement of ASQA accreditation, such templates ensure all required information is present. The researcher found that the language used in written VETiS information was clear and factual and met compliance requirements for accredited courses, according to the VET standards.

Unfortunately, the considerable information included on templates was seen as a potential barrier to enrolment at CSS1: “it’s written in 3pt size, has about 9000 words and is unreadable. No-one wants to look at it. It has too much information on it” (Tess, TFG1, 30/10/2012). The subject information handbook states that students may choose one VETiS course if they are seeking an ATAR. CSS1 did not charge additional costs for VETiS courses according to the subject handbook.

4.5.4 Summary Specific Research Question 2

Table 4-10 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS1 for Specific Research Question 2 which asked, *what information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?*
Table 4-10

CSS1 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisory processes</td>
<td>• Subject information evening, written handbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Career advice available upon request, no allocated position in school as career adviser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of advice</td>
<td>• VETiS teachers, career adviser, parents, non-VETiS teacher, because:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Useful, career, liked similar subject, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Not good for ATAR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written information</td>
<td>• Subject information handbook:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ BOS templates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Too much information on templates a barrier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Clear and factual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ One VETiS limit if seeking ATAR.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 CSS1 Specific Research Question 3

An analysis of the data generated the following issues which structure the presentation of findings for CSS1, Specific Research Question 3, *how do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?* Table 4-11 shows the foci used by the researcher to analyse Research Question 3.

Table 4-11

CSS1 understandings, Specific Research Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.6.1 Subject implementation processes.</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.2 Enabling influences for the...</td>
<td>Enabler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.3 Barriers to the implementation of VETiS</td>
<td>Barrier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.1 Subject implementation processes

Subject implementation decisions were made by a team at CSS1. This team included the senior executive team and the curriculum coordinator. The influences that motivate leadership decisions on subject implementation include the availability of resources, as well as the viability and competition for enrolments. Parents and students were identified by staff as the primary stakeholders in subject implementation decisions, as they are the customers who enrol their children into the school. Key school staff emphasised that the school leadership must “…compete as a school. We compete with students leaving our college to go to other places” (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012).

![CSS1 Subject Implementation Influence](image)

*Figure 4-4 CSS1 subject implementation influence*

Consequently, subject implementation decision-making process at CSS1 involved seven considerations (Figure 4-4). A primary consideration concerns the school’s reputation. How professional the school was perceived by parents and students influences student enrolment. In this context, the influences that contributed to a school’s reputation included the range of subjects offered and the school’s record of academic success. The CSS1 leadership team addressed these issues and as a result the school’s reputation was been enhanced. One key school staff member indicated that the school had developed a strong reputation as a school of choice over time, and said that:
...it has taken a long time to be seen as not only a viable option but the best option for students. Our school can help students achieve a great ATAR score and also help them gain skills to get traineeships or apprenticeship, each pathway is valued”. (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012)

Another primary consideration concerns competition for enrolments from neighbouring and boarding schools, based on the changing student profile at CSS1. Two differences were identified by staff: an increase of students who were staying until the age of 17 in accordance with changed government legislation and students who in previous years would have left to attend boarding school. CSS1 experienced increased numbers of students in Stage 6 from these ‘different’ students. The reasons which explain why more students remained at CSS1 include the influence of droughts contributing to diminishing employment opportunities and financial hardship of families. In addition, the enhanced reputation of CSS1 attracted students who would have previously enrolled in boarding schools. Consequently decisions regarding subject implementation were influenced by the educational interests of these different types of students. The range of student needs within the school was a consideration when making decisions related to which subjects to implement. One key staff member stated that:

...we try to cover a full range of subjects to compete as a school. We also have to have subjects for all students. With more students staying till 17 and these are often those who would have left to take up jobs, we are increasing the number of VETiS courses. (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012)

Other considerations relate to the qualifications of teachers and the availability of suitable facilities. There was consensus among staff that VETiS teacher qualification requirements and the provision of suitable facilities and equipment underpinned VETiS subject implementation decisions. One key school staff member went on to say:

We have several things to consider—the expertise of staff, and with the new mandatory laws on VET accreditation. That's a very big one because we obviously can't offer a VET course unless we have full accreditation. Our facilities. Then the preference of the students. So through the year we look at what kids are enjoying, not enjoying, reasons why they're enjoying them, and then follow a path. (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012)
Student interest and demographic are also considered. Students indicated their interest through the opportunity to list their preferences initially, according to school staff. Student demographic also influenced subject implementation decisions; many students did not go to university as they could not afford to, even though they achieved good ATARs (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012). This in turn became the agenda for teacher student interviews, as said by one key school staff member.

We are trying to address the needs of our kids first. Then, based on numbers, we allocate lines and then interview students to see what they are going to select. It is a four-stage process before timetable lines are set up. (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012)

4.6.2 Enabling influences for the implementation of VETiS

Enabling influences for implementation of VETiS at CSS1 include competition for enrolments, teacher qualifications, school facilities, and RTO scope and teacher willingness.

The first enabling influence involves competition between schools to attract enrolments. There were changes in the profile of students completing their secondary education in the town in which CSS1 is situated. Extended periods of drought and resultant financial hardship influenced parents choosing local schools for their children in contrast to the tradition of sending students to boarding schools. Some students who would have stayed at CSS1 moved to the local government school because their parents could no longer afford school fees. Other students who would have attended boarding school remained at local schools because of financial reasons.

There was consensus among staff that the increase in legal school leaving age to 17 meant that more students who would previously have left to begin employment or TAFE are still required to be in school (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012). Consequently, school leadership policies have been implemented to attract these students to the school. School leadership made decisions to increase the number of vocational courses to meet these changes and compete for enrolments, according to school key personnel (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012).
A second enabling reason was the availability of resources. The availability of qualified staff and facilities influenced subject implementation decisions. VETiS course implementation is enabled when existing staff have appropriate qualifications, prerequisite experience and access to industry-standard facilities within the school (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012). Key school personnel indicated that the school could not “offer VETiS unless they had qualified staff plus the required facilities” (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012).

A third enabler was the qualifications listed within the scope of the diocesan Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The scope of registration is a list of qualifications that the RTO has been approved by ASQA to deliver. The school may only consider the range of qualifications on the approved RTO scope of registration. The RTO will only approve courses to be delivered at schools when appropriate facilities and teachers are available. The range of qualifications on the approved scope of registration enabled school leadership to consider which courses are appropriate to their students and if the school had the resources to deliver those courses.

A fourth enabler was the passion and enthusiasm of VETiS teachers and staff. It was indicated that staff who actively promoted VETiS within the school improved the status of the subject and generated awareness among non-VETiS staff and leadership about the benefits of offering a range of VETiS subjects (Kris, KI1, 30/10/2012).

4.6.3 Barriers to the implementation of VETiS

Barriers to VETiS implementation at CSS1 are staffing allocation, staff qualifications, teacher willingness to teach VETiS and the qualifications listed on the scope of the school RTO.

The first barrier to VETiS implementation was the limited availability of qualified and trained VETiS staff. According to key school personnel, staffing allocations were calculated at the diocesan level, based on student enrolments. As a result, staff numbers were capped. If the existing staffing base did not have a teacher with the required VETiS qualifications, the school was unable to offer that subject. School key
personnel indicated that CSS1 “offers all the subject possibilities with the current staff members’ qualifications” (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012).

A second barrier was the amount of extra work involved in delivering VETiS. The additional work involved in VETiS compliance for assessment and reporting deters teachers from involving themselves in VETiS. It also dampens the enthusiasm of coordinators who are responsible for implementing and overseeing compliance. The extra paperwork had discouraged teachers from continued delivery of VETiS: “A VETiS subject was replaced with a traditional subject because the teacher felt the extra paperwork was too much” (Karri, KI3, 30/10/2012).

A third barrier concerns the regulations mandated by the RTO scope of registration. To register a qualification the RTO must provide evidence to ASQA that they have trainers/teachers with the qualifications, facilities, and resources and can provide a learning and assessment strategy that complies with Training Package specifications. The selection of VETiS subjects for schools were limited to the courses listed on the RTO scope and only if qualified teachers and suitable facilities were available in that school (Tom, TFG1, 30/10/2012). This was a barrier to VETiS implementation as vocational courses extend to every industry area, while an RTO may only deliver from their approved scope of registration. If the school has appropriate teachers and facilities for an industry course which is not on scope, a VETiS course cannot be implemented unless the RTO extends their scope. Consequently school decisions were restricted to the scope of registration, limiting the capacity to meet student interest and consider local employment opportunities.

4.6.4 Summary Specific Research Question 3

Table 4-12 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS1 Specific Research Question 3, *How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?*
### Table 4-12

**CSS1 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision makers</td>
<td>• Large team make decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents and students stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision process</td>
<td>• School reputation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Competition for enrolments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting the needs of students who are now staying till 17—different type of student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student interest and demographic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling factors</td>
<td>• Qualified teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Competition for enrolments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Change in student demographic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• RTO scope of registration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Passionate and enthusiastic teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>• Limited staff allocation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of qualified staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Additional workload in VETiS for teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• RTO limitations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.7 Conclusion CSS1

CSS1 competes with both local and boarding schools for enrolments. Leadership at this school recognised that for the school to be viable it needed to meet the needs of all students to maximise enrolments. The leadership at this school actively promoted a school culture and reputation for being a competitive school of choice for parents as the school can meet the needs of students who are intending a university pathway as well as those who are not. The reputation of the school for meeting the needs of students saw increased enrolments in Year 11 and 12. VETiS at this school was promoted by school leadership as being suitable for all students.

Students were provided with subject information at a subject information evening where they were issued with a written subject information handbook. Informal advice was given by both VETiS and non-VETiS teachers. There was no designated career adviser at this school; however, the curriculum coordinator did provide this service to
students who requested it. Informal advice also came from parents; this often reflected parent expectations of the post-school career of their child and was often believed by staff to be unrealistic.

Students at CSS1 valued personal advice over group advisory processes for subject selection. VETiS teachers, non-VETiS teachers, parents and the career adviser provide positive advice that the skills learned are useful and valuable for future employment. Negative advice tended to come from non-VETiS teachers and was related to VETiS not being beneficial to the ATAR score.

Subject implementation decisions are made by a large team of school executive staff at CSS1. The executive team at this school did not include personnel with VETiS experience. CSS1 leadership had promoted the benefits of VETiS to the entire school staff, consequently both VETiS and non-VETiS staff support this subject area. Non-VETiS staff encouraged VETiS participation by being flexible with schoolwork and assessments in their subject area when VETiS students were absent due to work placement.

VETiS coordination at this school was combined with another Key Learning Area (KLA), in Technical and Applied Studies (TAS). TAS courses would not result in industry qualifications. Concerns were raised at CSS1 that the coordinator perceived that courses within the TAS KLA were more suitable for school delivery than VETiS and that VETiS should be delivered at TAFE. The reasons for this belief related to the availability of subjects which addressed similar content interests such as Technology Wood instead of VETiS Construction. TAS courses would not result in industry qualifications, therefore would not involve the extra workload for teachers due to the compliance requirements for VETiS. However, VETiS teachers were passionate about VETiS and believed that the industry relevant skills and employment opportunities for students was worth the extra work. Stakeholders at this school felt that the lack of coordinator enthusiasm about VETiS was a barrier to VETiS participation and implementation.

The extra workload for VETiS teachers due to compliance was identified as a barrier to implementation. CSS1 identified that the passion and enthusiasm of potential new teachers of VETiS was hampered by the extra work involved: firstly to become
qualified, then to maintain industry experience and finally to keep up with the assessment requirements and paperwork for compliance. Existing VETiS teachers indicated that the extra work was a barrier for continued enthusiasm and passion for teaching VETiS.

While the support of the diocesan RTO was an enabler of VETiS, the limitation of the scope of registration was identified as a barrier. The RTO was registered to deliver specific qualifications, and the school may only deliver those qualifications listed on the RTO scope. This was a limitation to the implementation of VETiS, and may have affected participation as students may have been more interested in qualifications not on this scope.

The data collected at CSS1 provided insights into issues, enablers and barriers relating to the implementation and uptake of VETiS at this school. The experiences of CSS1 were considered when conducting research at CSS2. While the main interview questions remained the same at each school, probe questions were employed to further understand salient influences. It was important to this research to identify similarities and differences among schools to explain the variations between schools in the uptake and implementation of VETiS.
CHAPTER 5: Findings—Case Site School 2

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from Case Site School 2 (CSS2). The first section describes the school, participation in VETiS and the leadership history of the school (Section 5.2). The following sections present the research analysis and data coding which initially stemmed from influences identified in the conceptual framework synthesised in Chapter 2. Codes generated from the literature review (see Table 3-4, Table 3-5, Table 3-6) were linked to specific questions which identified themes to explain the influence which affected the implementation and uptake of VETiS (Sections 5.4.4, 5.5.4, 5.6.4).

- Section 5.4 discusses specific Research Question 1: What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?
- Section 5.5 discusses specific Research Question 2: What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
- Section 5.6 discusses specific Research Question 3: How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?

5.2 CSS2 context

CSS2 is located in rural NSW and is a regional comprehensive co-educational Catholic secondary school with an enrolment of between 700-800 students. At the time of this study this school had an above average Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA), according to ACARA’s (n.d.) My School website (ACARA n.d., 2013). The ICSEA score is made up of student factors such as parent education and occupation together with school factors of geographic location and proportion of indigenous students. The school had a lower than average socio-economic status for non-government NSW schools (Department of Education and Training, 2018). SES is a measure of a school community’s economic and social position in relation to other schools. Although these are 2018 data they are indicative of the profile of the school at the time of the study in 2012. Table 5-1 summarises the school profile for CSS2.
CSS2 school profile (ACARA n.d., 2013; Department of Education and Training, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School sector</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School type</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year range</td>
<td>7-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)</td>
<td>1020-1030 (average ICSEA 1000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous students</td>
<td>1-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language background Other than English</td>
<td>0-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic Status (SES)</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Average for NSW non-government schools is 107)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (DET, 2018)

CSS2 had a record of varied VETiS participation between 2005 and 2013. The numbers were particularly high in 2008 and have evidenced declining participation to 2013 (Table 5-2). Participation in VETiS peaked in 2008, when 45% of all students in Stage 6 participated in the three VETiS subjects that were offered. Enrolment in Stage 6 VETiS courses decreased from 25% in 2005 to 20% in 2013.

The participation rate in 2013 was below both state (32%) and Catholic school (34%) participation rates for that year (Catholic Schools NSW, 2019; NSW Board of Studies, 2013).
Table 5-2

CSS2 implementation and participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Year 11 %</th>
<th>Year 12 %</th>
<th>All Stage 6 %</th>
<th>Year 12 No. VETiS courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the nine-year period shown in Table 5-2, CSS2 was led by the same principal. In contrast, over the same period there were two curriculum coordinators and four changes in VETiS coordinator (2005–2008, 2008–2011, 2011–2012, and 2013). The school leaving age increased to 17 in 2010 and there was one change in career adviser (2005–2008, 2008–2013). Staff believed that these changes influenced the changes identified above (Tina, TFG2, Kerry, KI4, Kara KI6, 7/11/2012).

The curriculum coordinator was part of the decision-making team for subject implementation decisions at CSS2. Staff also believed that “…subject implementation had a lot to do with the opinions of the decision-makers and they decided which subjects would be pushed or not” (Keeley KI5, 7/11/2012). Staff also believed that the change in personnel and the opinion of individuals in school leadership positions about VETiS as a subject area explained the fluctuation in VETiS at CSS2. One staff member said, “I'll give you a direct quote, I have been in the office with the door open and students in the hallway when I have heard a key subject decision-maker say, ‘why should you pander to the dummies in VETiS’” (Keeley, KI5, 7/11/2012).

The role of the CSS2 VETiS coordinator was influential in representing VETiS at leadership meetings, as well as promoting VETiS within the school and supporting VETiS staff with compliance issues. CSS2 allocated the VETiS coordination duties
to the TAS coordinator in 2013. Previously it had been given as an additional responsibility to a VETiS teacher 2011–2013. However, in 2008–2011 the role was the responsibility of the career adviser. From 2005-2008 one person was assigned the responsibility of TAS/career/VETiS coordination. The VETiS coordination role attracted a time allocation without pecuniary allowance. This practice differed from other KLA coordination roles, which were paid. The reasons for these changes were the perceived inequity between the quantity of work involved in VETiS coordination and the lack of recognition from leadership for VETiS as a KLA (Keeley KI5, 7/11/2012): “VETiS is attached to TAS, like a bubble” (Kym KI7, 7/11/2012).

CSS2 experienced variations in participation and implementation rates from 2005 to 2013. The potential influences to be analysed initially were changes in school leadership, VETiS coordination and the school leaving age.

Data collection for CSS2 involved document analysis, student and parent surveys, a focus group with VETiS teachers and semi-structured interviews with school key personnel. Table 5-3 shows the codes used related to each data collection strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant group</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Student survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parent survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS Teachers</td>
<td>TFG</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tina, Tim, Tenaia, Tania, Tracy, Tootsie, Tilly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Key Personnel (principal, curriculum coordinator, career adviser, VETiS coordinator)</td>
<td>KI</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kerry, Kara, Keeley, Kym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document</td>
<td>Document</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Analysis

The research analysis and data coding initially stemmed from influences identified in the conceptual framework synthesised in Chapter 2. Other codes were developed
inductively by an iterative process involving pattern identification. Codes were linked to specific questions which identified themes to explain behaviours and considerations in relation to the implementation and uptake of VETiS in CSS2. A synopsis of findings is presented in Sections 5.3.4, 5.4.4 and 5.5.4 which outline the codes and emergent themes found in the data.

5.4 CSS2 Specific Research Question 1

Three themes were identified in the data emerging in response to the first research question, *what influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?* These themes are presented in Table 5-4 and are further discussed in this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Understandings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5.4.1 Information to students and parent advice | • School processes for disseminating subject information.  
• How VETiS programs address parent expectation. |
| 5.4.2 Reasons for subject selection | • Differing reasons different subjects.  
• Social aspects of schooling.  
• Differences in understandings of teachers/leadership and students.  
• School demographics. |
| 5.4.3 Enablers and barriers for VETiS subject choice | • VETiS  
• SBAT  
• TVET |

5.4.1 Information to students and parental influence

Two aspects influence student and parental decisions concerning VETiS subject choice. They are:

• how information concerning VETiS is disseminated to students; and
• how VETiS programs address parent expectations.
5.4.1.1 School processes for disseminating HSC subject selection information

Year 10 to 11 subject information practices offer students, and their parents, information about the Higher School Certificate, ATAR and subject selection. School leadership personnel decided how these practices were conducted, by whom and the comprehensiveness of information for each subject area. CSS2 processes included an information evening, a compulsory interview, a decision-making day and provision of a subject handbook.

CSS2 mandated a compulsory parent and student interview with school staff to provide individualised advice for students when choosing subjects for the HSC. School leadership acknowledged that parents were primary advisers in the subject selection process. Unfortunately, staff also believed that there was the potential for parents to be “not realistic or outdated in their perceptions of subjects” (Karl, KI6, 7/11/2012).

The school also conducted a decision-making day for students, led by the career adviser. This included the opportunity of visiting classes and see VETiS in action. This school had a 0.8FTE career adviser who offered interviews and subject selection support on an ongoing basis to students, either individually or with parents.

Teachers had considerable influence over students and their choice of VETiS at CSS2. Some non-VETiS teachers appeared to be ill-informed about the benefits of VETiS and advised students that “VETiS was not good for an ATAR” (Keeley, KI5, 7/11/2012). Other teachers from non-VETiS courses “recruited the students they want, and discouraged the students they don’t want” (Kym, KI7, 7/11/2012). Consequently, the less academically able students and students with special needs were encouraged to engage with VETiS. Staff also believed that a message was generated to parents and students that “the students who aren’t academic or have special needs do VETiS” (Tim, TFG2, 7/11/2012). Consequently, there was consensus among teachers that some more academically able students were deterred from enrolling.
5.4.1.2 How VETiS subjects address parent expectation

Parent expectation concerning their children’s future influenced the advice they gave regarding subject choice, according to some of those interviewed. Furthermore, subject choice was believed to be a joint decision by the student and their parent: “it’s up to them and their parents, because parents have a huge input into subject choice” (Kerry, Kl4, 1/09/12). Teachers believed that parents’ opinions were based on their own personal experience of school and school subjects.

Staff also believed that parents who completed the HSC or went to university expected their child to follow a similar path (Tina, TFG2, 7/11/2012). Teachers also were of the opinion that parents preferred their child to study the same types of courses they experienced at school. For example, one teacher commented, “parents say things like, ‘I would like my child to do economics, I did it at school and really liked it’” (Kym, Kl7, 7/11/2012). However, teachers felt that such expectations may be detrimental to the students’ success in the HSC. One teacher commented, “…the parent will say that the child has to do a particular subject. The kid may have no ability in that area—it sets them up for failure” (Kym, Kl7, 7/11/2012). Teachers believed that the advice parents gave was often based on their own experiences of secondary school education, which subjects they did, enjoyed or felt were useful. For example, another teacher said:

Kids are guided by what their parents want to do, and there is still a culture of parents pushing kids to do what is seen as traditional subjects, the subjects they did, instead of giving the kids an opportunity to look at other things (Tina, TFG2, 7/11/2012).

There was consensus among teachers that some parents had the expectation that their child would finish the HSC and they would therefore place pressure on their child to stay at school. One teacher commented that, “Some students are only here because their parents expect them to finish Year 12, so they are under huge pressure from the parent” (Tim, TFG2, 7/11/2012).

Teachers and leadership felt that parents had a greater influence on subject choice than school staff, and that this could have influenced career direction. Some parents had an expectation about the student’s future career based on personal belief that it was a good career path. For example, one teacher said, “the kid has never verbalised
an interest in that career but parents push them in that direction, they think it is a good career and the kid has never objected to it” (Keeley, K15 7/11/2012). Another said, “Many parents really want their child to become a doctor or a lawyer” although this may not be the career path that the student wants (Tim, TFG2 7/11/2012).

5.4.2 Reasons for subject choices

A student survey (N=117) was conducted at CSS2 and students indicated their choice of subjects and ranked how influential each reason listed was for each subject chosen. The list of reasons was developed from interviews and surveys with teachers, parents and students in the pilot phase of this research. The ranking used a Likert scale ranging from extremely important (4) to not important (0). Table 5-5 shows median scores of students’ reasons for subject choice at CSS2.
Table 5-5  
**CSS2 median responses for subject choice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Selection Influence</th>
<th>VET Business Services (BS)</th>
<th>VET Construction</th>
<th>VET Hospitality</th>
<th>VET Information Technology</th>
<th>Tafe delivered VET (VTET)</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Religious Education</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Sciences</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Content Endorsed Course</th>
<th>Community &amp; Family Studies (CAFS)</th>
<th>Personal Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)</th>
<th>Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE)</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Creative Arts</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>All VETiS</th>
<th>All Non-VETiS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Genuinely interested in this subject</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - I am good at this subject</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - This subject is good for my ATAR</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - This subject is a pre-requisite for future study</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - This subject is useful for career intent</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - This subject will give me skills for my personal life</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - This subject looks good on my HSC</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - This subject is good for my resume</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - My friends are in this class</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - I like the teacher</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - It was the only subject on the line that was suitable to</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than other subjects on this line</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 - This subject might help me get a job</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - Done this subject before and enjoyed it</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - Subject has a reputation for achieving high results in the HSC exam</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-5 shows that each of the fifteen reasons was used by students in each subject choice to varying degrees. Different reasons were likely to influence VETiS subject choice compared to non-VETiS subjects. Figure 5-1 diagrammatically presents the influences more or less likely to influence VETiS than non-VETiS subjects at CSS2. A ranking of 3.0 or above on the four-point Likert scale (important/very important) was deemed a major reason. Rankings of less than 1.6 had little influence over subject choices.
The major reasons more likely to influence choice of VETiS than non-VETiS subjects at CSS2 were:

- 1—Genuine interest (VETiS 3.56/non-VETiS 3.24);
- 2—Being good at this subject (VETiS 3.35/non-VETiS 3.00);
- 5—Useful for future career intent (VETiS 3.42/non-VETiS 2.84);
- 8—Good for resume (VETiS 3.51/non-VETiS 2.65); and
- 13—Helps to get a job (VETiS 3.54/non-VETiS 2.55).

There were no reasons less likely to influence VETiS than non-VETiS subject choice at CSS2. Students chose VETiS subjects because of genuine interest, being good at the subject and its usefulness for future employment (Table 5-5, Figure 5-1). Genuine interest and being good at the subject ranged from being important to
extremely important in all subject areas including VETiS. The subject’s usefulness in future career plans, its usefulness on a resume and for future employment in influencing VETiS subject selection ranged from important to extremely important, whereas for non-VETiS subjects those influences were a little important to important.

Students were influenced to a lesser degree by friends being in the class and the subject being the only suitable subject on the timetable line for both VETiS and non-VETiS subjects. These influences were indicated to be less important in all subject areas; interestingly students ranked these reasons lower for VETiS subjects than non-VETiS subjects. However, school staff also believed that peers had a strong influence on subject choice, which contrasted with the views of students. For example, one teacher said, “there is the peer aspect of students choosing a subject because their friends chose it” (Tim, TFG2, 7/11/2012).

Teachers agreed that students chose VETiS because of interest and the vocational benefits; one teacher said, “subject choice was because of interest, and the vocational certificate at the end of it” (Tim, TFG2, 7/11/2012). Teachers also believed that students chose VETiS due to the “hands-on practical” learning activities and skill outcomes acquired. There was consensus among VETiS teachers that non-VETiS staff perceived VETiS was easier than other subjects and reinforced this idea with students; for example, one teacher said, “…unfortunately we have got a lot of staff who believe VETiS is easier than other subjects, and that is why students choose it” (Tina, TFG2, 7/11/2012).

Some in leadership felt that students would not choose VETiS if they wanted a high ATAR. For example, one respondent said, “…if students are looking for high ATAR scores for uni they would steer clear of VETiS completely” (Kym, KI7, 7/11/2012). Students denied this (Table 5-5, Figure 5-1). They believed that that ATAR contribution was important in the choosing of VETiS subjects. ATAR was indicated by students as extremely important in hospitality, important to extremely important in construction, and a little important in information technology. Students indicated that the ATAR contribution in relation to TVET choice was less than a little important. This is interesting to this research as ATAR contribution as a reason differed in importance between VETiS subjects; this difference was not as great between non-VETiS subjects. Teachers believed that students could see the value of VETiS
contribution for the ATAR: “…they chose VETiS because of interest and because they could use it in the ATAR” (Tim, TFG2, 7/11/2012).

Teachers and leadership believed that students chose VETiS subjects because of interest, the skills they were able to learn and its post-school usefulness. For example, one key staff member said “students choose VETiS because it will help them when they leave school” (Kerry, KI4, 7/11/2012).

5.4.3 Enablers and barriers for VETiS subject choice

In the next two sections, enablers and barriers for VETiS subject selection are discussed. These are shown in Table 5-6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enablers that could encourage students to choose VETiS</th>
<th>Barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Peers.</td>
<td>1. Type of student encouraged to do VETiS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Preference for practical learning.</td>
<td>2. Perception by non-VETiS staff and students about ATAR contribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher and subject reputation.</td>
<td>4. Timetable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Principal commitment.</td>
<td>5. Work placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Qualifications and skills.</td>
<td>7. Poor reputation of SBATs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Perceived as easier than other subjects.</td>
<td>8. SBAT absences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Timetable.</td>
<td>9. Poor communication between stakeholders TVET affecting leadership enthusiasm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Promotion and accessibility of TVET.</td>
<td>10. Cost of TVET.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Absences from school TVET.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4.3.1 Enablers that could encourage students to choose VETiS

Ten enabling influences that support VETiS subject selection are now discussed. The first enabler was that teachers believed that students wanted to be among peers and friends. It was indicated that students were influenced by peer culture, social inclusion and to be ‘like’ their friends or to be seen to be ‘like’ the other students enrolling in a subject area. Teachers believed that this may influence their subject choices and career intentions (Tim, TFG2, 7/11/2012). Interestingly, student survey response did not rate friends as a significant reason for VETiS subject choice (figure 5-1).

Practical learning activities were identified as a second enabling influence on VETiS subject selection. The theoretical learning being offset with practical learning appealed to students, according to one teacher who said, “the hands-on involvement with the content makes a big difference for kids at risk of being disengaged from the learning process” (Tina, TFG2, 7/11/2012). Student survey response agreed that the practical skills gained motivated VETiS subject selection (figure 5-1).

A third enabler was the positive status of a VETiS subject. Some staff believed that VETiS subject status was influenced by the type of student participating in that subject and the visibility of the subject within the school. Staff felt that the status of VETiS subjects was improved through participation by academic students (Kara, KI5, 7/11/2012). The reasons indicated for this was evidence of previous success of students in VETiS courses in the HSC examination. This evidence of success, and subsequent value in ATAR scores, increased student confidence that VETiS subjects were suited to all students. Student survey responses confirmed that the reputation of VETiS subjects supported choices (figure 5-1).

A fourth enabler for VETiS selection was the teacher and subject reputation. There was consensus among respondents that teacher reputation influenced student subject choices. For example, one staff member said “students know that they are going to get the best marks by studying certain subjects because they know which teachers are going to teach better than others” (Kym, KI7, 7/11/2012). It was indicated that teacher enthusiasm may also influence the reputation of a subject area. Additionally, enthusiastic teachers promoted subjects by making them visible with projects and activities, therefore encouraging future students to choose VETiS
Student survey data did not confirm or deny this enabler and resulted in a mid-range response to the teacher as a reason for choice (figure 5-1).

A fifth enabler was the commitment of the principal to VETiS. This commitment was demonstrated in CSS2 by the allocation of resources for industry-standard equipment and the personal involvement of the principal in local VETiS advisory groups (Kara, KL6, 7/11/2012). Involvement in these advisory groups increased the principal’s understandings and enthusiasm for VETiS subjects. The industry-standard equipment and facilities subsequently promoted the interest of future students (Tim, TFG2, 7/11/2012). This was not specified in student survey data.

A sixth enabler was the practical nature of VETiS delivery and more students choosing to complete Year 12: One teacher said, “…the kids (who) are now staying, who previously would have left, are looking for subjects that are more practical in nature” (Keeley, KL5, 7/11/2012). Another reinforced this, and said:

They are students who are not going to go to university or would manage university, number one. They are also the students who need hands-on learning and practical activities. (Kym, KL7, 7/11/2012)

A seventh enabler was the attractiveness to employers of the VET qualification and skills learned. The qualification and skills were said to be an advantage to students when seeking post-school employment. For example, one teacher said:

The qualification such as a Certificate II is attractive to students as it is something they can take with them to an employer. From an employer’s perspective a VETiS certificate that relates to their industry is going to be much more appealing than the fact that they did something like biology. (Keeley, KL5, 7/11/2012)

The perception by students and non-VETiS teachers that VETiS subjects were easier is an eighth enabling influence. The perception that VETiS subjects were easier influenced advice offered to students by non-VETiS teachers (Tina, TFG2, 7/11/2012). Student survey data confirmed that some students choose VETiS because it is easier than other subject on the same line (figure 5-1).
An eighth enabler was the availability and location of VETiS subjects on the timetable. At CSS2, students indicated subject preferences, then the school used that data to generate a timetable with minimal clashes. Students were then given a revised list of subjects allocated to lines. This revised list may have positively influenced VETiS selection if the competing subjects were less preferred, however this was also claimed to be a barrier if the reverse was true (Kerry, Kl4, 7/11/2012). This was neither confirmed nor denied in student survey data (figure 5-1).

An enabler for TVET was the promotion of a range of externally-delivered VETiS to students. TVET identified growth in student participation in recent years due to promotion by the school (Keeley, Kl5, 7/11/2012). This was not identified in student survey data.

Ten enabling influences encouraged students to select VETiS at CSS2. They were social inclusion, practical learning opportunities, positive status of VETiS, VETiS reputation, principal commitment, qualifications/skills, ease in learning, timetable and promotion.

5.4.3.2 Barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS

Eleven barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS are now discussed. Firstly, teachers believed that encouraging specific student types into VETiS subjects may deter other students who do not see themselves in the same category or ‘like’ these students. However, less academic students continued to be encouraged into VETiS. These included students with special needs who were completing a life skills pathway to the HSC; one teacher said, “…when VETiS courses are promoted as being suited to life skills students the status of VETiS is lowered” (Kerry, Kl4, 7/11/2012). Students who were less academically successful at CSS2 were encouraged to believe VETiS was easier than other subjects and more suited to them (Kym, Kl7, 7/11/2012):
There was the perception that VETiS was an easy subject and that it wasn’t like a proper Board of Studies subject. There were staff who pushed certain students into it as they believed it didn’t really matter because it was not a real subject. There is still an element within the staff that think the kids just play with industry equipment. They don’t understand that there is a lot of content and if you do the exam for VETiS it can have a great effect on the ATAR. *(Tim, TFG2, 7/11/2012)*

A second barrier was the perception by non-VETiS teachers and students that VETiS subjects did not contribute well to the ATAR score. VETiS teachers believed that students, teachers of non-VETiS subjects and school leadership felt that VETiS did not contribute positively to the ATAR. This belief lacks evidence according to VETiS teachers because students who do perform well in their VETiS examinations had their ATAR results enhanced: “…a Band 6 in VETiS affects the ATAR in a positive way” *(Tina, TFG2, 7/11/2012)*.

A third barrier was subject marketing. According to those interviewed, lack of clarity and understanding about the benefits of VETiS qualifications was a negative influence on student and parent interest. Some students were either confused or unaware that the certificates were real industry qualifications and the skills being taught were valued by industry. This perception was, for example, highlighted in one comment: “They don’t see that it’s a work-related qualification that gives them that step up when they go out into the workforce—it’s not being promoted to students” *(Tina, TFG2, 7/11/2012)*.

A fourth barrier was the structure of the school timetable and consequent effect on subject choice availability. Subjects are allocated lines on the timetable and students must choose between subjects available on that line *(Kym, KI7, 7/11/2012)*. According to some teachers the way the timetable was structured may inhibit subject selection by restricting student choice to a set of subjects (which may or may not be of interest to the student).

A fifth barrier was the mandated requirement of 70 hours of industry work placement. Students who were committed to achieving in other subjects were disinclined to enrol in more than one VETiS subject because of this requirement *(Kym, KI7, 7/11/2012)*. The absences due to work placement and the overall effect on student performance were a concern to teachers and leadership. The type of students who may have
been interested in VETiS at CSS2 were “more likely to be the kids who are not as academic and who can’t afford to have two weeks out of school” (Kym, KI7, 7/11/2012). Therefore the potential risk to academic success due to absences in other subjects negatively influenced VETiS subject promotion and selection for some students.

A sixth barrier was the people in leadership roles. It was indicated that the personal preferences, experience and perspective on secondary education of those in leadership could influence decisions made in relation to VETiS. For example, one respondent said:

It depends on the personnel in the school which subjects are pushed and which aren’t necessarily encouraged. Some people acknowledge VETiS as being very important, needing to be encouraged and promoted, and others treat it as an afterthought. (Keeley, KI5, 7/11/2012)

A negative reputation of SBATs within the school was a seventh barrier to SBAT promotion and selection by students. Key personnel indicated that reputation of SBATs at CSS2 was influenced by a history of poor retention rates. These low retention rates may be attributed to students leaving the school to accept fulltime apprenticeships, or to students choosing not to continue at school (Keeley, 7/11/2012).

An eighth barrier to SBAT engagement was absence due to the work requirements. SBATs have a minimum work requirement of 100 days over the two-year period; some have more. The length of time students are absent from school due to the work requirements, in some cases two days per week, was seen to be disruptive to other subjects and teachers (Keeley, KI5, 7/11/2012).

A ninth barrier related to TVET was continued enthusiasm and confidence in TVET participation by those in school leadership. This continued enthusiasm was negatively influenced by a history of poor communication between the school and TAFE which related to student attendance. Staff indicated that some students were telling the school that they were going to TAFE but not attending TVET classes. School leadership were not informed until the final TVET assessment results were presented at the end of the year, showing non-participation. As the HSC requires
attendance in a minimum number of units this lack of communication jeopardised the capacity of school staff to ensure that the students had enough units for HSC eligibility (Keeley, KI5, 7/11/2012).

A tenth barrier related to TVET participation was the financial obligations to the student and the school. Parents are required to pay additional fees for TVET; one teacher said, “this is an equity issue as often these were the families who can least afford additional fees” (Keeley, KI5, 7/11/2012).

An eleventh barrier to TVET was student absence due to TAFE attendance because students had to catch up on work in other subject areas as a result (Keeley, KI5, 7/11/2012). TVET class delivery usually included students from multiple schools, and teachers believed this situation created difficulties through the impracticalities of aligning the timetables of various schools. Consequently, TVET students were absent from other classes on a regular basis at times mandated by TAFE. It was only self-motivated students who chose to address the problems associated with missing lessons because of TVET attendance (Kara, KI5, 7/11/2012).

Eleven barriers discouraging VETiS selection were identified at CSS2. They were student stereotype, ATAR, marketing, timetable, work placement, leadership, SBAT reputation, SBAT absences, TVET communications, cost of TVET and TVET absences.

5.4.4 Summary Specific Research Question 1

Table 5-7 summarises codes and emergent themes for CSS2 Specific Research Question 1 that asked, what influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?
Table 5-7
CSS2 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| School processes and structure of planned subject information dissemination | - Subject handbook; teachers advising; compulsory interview with parent student and school staff; decision-making day with subject visits and talking to current students; peer influence; parent advice; career advice.  
- How VETiS programs address parent expectation. |
| Reasons for subject choice | - Useful for future career.  
- Might help get a job.  
- Good for resume.  
- Being good at it.  
- Genuine interest. |
| Enabling factors influencing subject choice for VETiS | - Different learning preferences; visibility of VETiS in school; easier than other subjects; relevance post-school; qualifications; industry equipment; leadership commitment; interest; passion of teacher; exam not compulsory; timetable. |
| Factors which create a barrier for VETiS subject choice who, what, why | - Student stereotype; ATAR considerations; confusion about VETiS; subject marketing; restriction on VETiS opportunities; school leadership; teacher; work placement; timetable; negative SBAT experiences; SBAT absences; communication TVET; cost TVET. |

5.5 CSS2 Specific Research Question 2

An analysis of the data from surveys, staff interviews and focus groups generated the following issues which structure the presentation of findings for CSS2, Specific Research Question 2, what information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects? Table 5-8 shows the themes and understandings for Specific Research Question 2.
5.5.1 Subject advisory processes

There were a variety of advisory processes which guided students and their parents in subject choices at CSS2, including both formal and informal processes. Formal processes involved a decision-making day, information evening, and a compulsory interview between a school staff member and the student with their parent present. In addition, each student was issued with a written subject handbook. Informal processes involved students engaging in personal discussions with teachers.

School processes offered students subject advice and amplified information. Students valued personal discussions with the career advisor and subject information group sessions more highly than other processes. In particular they valued individual interviews with the school career adviser (both with and without parents being
present) more than other initiatives they experienced in gaining subject information and advice. This is shown in Figure 5-2.

![Case School 2](image)

**Figure 5-2** CSS2 student survey response, student value on subject information processes

Specifically, helpful subject selection advice about whether to study VETiS subjects or not originated from VETiS teachers, friends or parents (Table 5-9). More than 25% of students surveyed were advised to study VETiS. This advice came from parents, VETiS teachers and friends. However, many students who were advised to study VETiS did not choose these subjects. The advice included an explanation concerning the long-term benefits and usefulness of studying VETiS subjects. A small proportion (0.8%) of students was advised not to study VETiS. The reason behind the advice not to study VETiS concerned the comparatively larger workload in VETiS subjects than other subjects, and came from previous students.
Table 5-9

CSS2 student survey response advice specific to VETiS subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject advice specific to VETiS subjects</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Nature of advice given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students who were advised to study VETiS and did.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parents; VETiS teacher; friends.</td>
<td>Benefits in the long run; good for you to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who were advised to study VETiS and did NOT.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>VETiS teacher; non-VETiS teacher; parents.</td>
<td>Useful for future; nationally-recognised qualification; interesting; it will help get a job; good for career; a worthwhile course; student would do well in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students advised NOT to study VETiS and did NOT.</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Older students.</td>
<td>VETiS has a bigger workload.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students advised NOT to do a VETiS subject and DID.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5-3 shows each subject area and student acknowledgement of advice provided for each subject chosen. Of interest is that students received less subject advice about VETiS than other subjects.

**Figure 5-3 CSS2 subject advice, all subjects**
5.5.2 Advisers

Parents, teachers, friends and the school career adviser were key advisers available to students in the process of subject choice at CSS2. The type, extent and motivation underpinning the advice varied.

According to both teachers and students, subject advice by parents contributed and was influential in the subject decision-making process. Over 56% of students surveyed also acknowledged that their parents had provided advice for subjects they had chosen. Many parents provided advice on the basis of their own expectations of their children’s future. It was also said that, “parents often have different career intentions for their child than their kid does” (Keeley, KL5, 7/11/2012). Some parents had unrealistic understandings about their child’s academic ability, and “they think their child is really clever when they’re not” (Kara, KL6, 7/11/2012). The school process of a compulsory interview with parents and students aimed to provide realistic information and advice to support each student and their parent in subject choices. One teacher said:

Kids are guided by what their parents want them to do and there is still a culture of parents pushing kids to do what’s seen as the traditional academic subjects, instead of giving the kids more of an opportunity to look at other subjects like VETiS. (Tim, TFG2, 7/11/2012)

Moreover, parents’ advice was said to be influenced by their prior experiences of education and consequently emphasised the traditional subject areas, with which they were familiar:

Parents base their advice on the way education was when they were at school, they had to do the traditional subjects and they understand them. They don’t understand what VETiS courses are offering, they don’t understand the value of the qualifications gained. Parents are wary of the unfamiliar or unknown. (Tina, TFG2, 7/11/2012)

Not surprisingly, teachers were also primary advisers to students in subject choices. Students who were advised to study VETiS by teachers at CSS2 were indicated to be those who were interested, those likely to be less academic, and also students with special needs. The motivation underpinning this advice was the desire by teachers for students to be successful learners. One teacher said, “We have needy students
who aren’t going to succeed academically, and VETiS courses are ideal for them, it gives them life skills” (Kerry, KI4, 7/11/2012).

Teacher advice had the potential to either promote or discourage VETiS selection. Teachers believed that the rationale underpinning advice from teachers offered an insight to their motivation. There were instances when a teacher’s advice was not seen to be primarily the student’s welfare; for example, a statement was made, “Some teachers aren’t aware of the full benefits of VETiS subjects, and they tell the students that if you are academic and want a good ATAR don’t do VETiS” (Keeley, KI5, 7/11/2012). Some teachers were reported to actively recruit some students for their classes and discourage others; one respondent commented “…a few teachers are a bit precious about who they have in their classes” (Kym, KI7, 7/11/2012).

Career advice at CSS2 was given by the career adviser. Career adviser guidance through individual interviews was another source of subject advice valued by students. CSS2 employed a 0.8FTE qualified career adviser to support all students. The career adviser conducted a decision-making day where all subjects were showcased. At this time students had the opportunity of visiting classes and observing learning activities. Students also had the opportunity to speak with current students about the subject and to ask questions of the subject teacher. The career adviser also provided a questionnaire regarding career intentions to help guide students through the subject selection process (Keeley, KI5, 7/11/2012).

5.5.3 Written information

The subject information handbook included detailed information concerning each VETiS subject offered. Its format adopted a Board of Studies template. Because specific information to prospective students for Vocational Education and Training was a requirement of ASQA accreditation, such templates ensured all mandatory information was present. The language used in written VETiS information on the template was clear, reflecting requirements of VET accredited courses (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015).

General information about VETiS subjects included the statement “VETiS is a Category B course, Category B courses are not as rigorous as Category A courses”.
This definition had the potential to influence the reputation of VETiS subjects and become a barrier to implementation. Previous students in CSS2 had gained high scores in their HSC examinations in VETiS which had a positive effect on the ATAR score. Consequently, the status of VETiS improved due to high achievers choosing VETiS subjects (Kara, Kl6, 7/11/2012).

The subject information handbook stated that students may choose one VETiS course if they are seeking an ATAR. CSS2 charged fees for VETiS subject uniforms, personal equipment and consumables. These fees were a potential barrier to subject selection, although some non-VETiS subjects also attracted fees for consumables.

The subject handbook included information related to external delivery through TVET. This information stated that there was a $500 fee per TVET course and that additional fees may be imposed. There was limited information related to SBAT opportunities.

5.5.4 Summary Specific Research Question 2

Table 5-10 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS2 Specific Research Question 2 which asked, what information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
CSS2 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisory processes</td>
<td>• Decision-making day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subject information evening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Compulsory interview with a school staff member (teacher or leadership or administration) with parents mandated attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interview with career adviser available on request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Written handbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of advice</td>
<td>• VETiS teachers; friends; parents; older students; non-VETiS teachers; career adviser; because:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Good for future; qualification; interesting; help get a job; career; worthwhile; would do well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Bigger workload.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written information</td>
<td>• Subject information handbook:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o BOS template.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o “Category B not as rigorous as Category A”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o One VETiS if seeking ATAR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Fee information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Limited information about SBATs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o $500 per TVET plus “may be further fees”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6 CSS2 Specific Research Question 3

An analysis of the data generated the following issues which structure the presentation of findings for CSS2, Specific Research Question 3, *how do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?* Table 5-11 shows foci used by the researcher to analyse Specific Research Question 3.
Table 5-11

**CSS2 understandings, Specific Research Question 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.6.1 Subject implementation processes.</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.2 Enabling influences for the implementation of VETiS.</td>
<td>Enabler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.3 Barriers to the implementation of VETiS.</td>
<td>Barrier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.1 Subject implementation processes

Subject implementation decisions at CSS2 are made by the principal and the curriculum coordinator. Internal stakeholders in subject implementation were identified as the principal, curriculum coordinator, KLA coordinators, school executive and subject teachers. External stakeholders were the diocesan VETiS adviser and TAFE.

The influences that motivated decisions about subject implementation included the personal experience of decision makers, teacher qualifications, school reputation, and providing subjects that are compatible with students’ abilities/interest. Moreover, other considerations included the extent of the investment the school had in a particular subject area, as well how schools responded to the changing nature of students in Stage 6 studies. These are shown in Figure 5-4.
Consequently, subject implementation decision-making process at CSS2 involved five considerations. The primary consideration concerned teachers' qualifications and the extent of experience in industry areas, as well as the desire to keep teachers at the school by ensuring they were able to teach their speciality subject areas. One key staff member stated that “If the school doesn’t run a senior music class the teacher will leave to find another school who will run music for senior students” (Kym, KI7, 1/9/2012). In addition, it was said that:

…decisions are made after looking at teacher qualifications. Although you may have a teacher who is qualified to teach a subject but does not want to teach that particular subject for whatever reason. (Tina, TFG2, 1/9/2012)

The next consideration was the investment the school had made in a subject area in facilities and resources. Subject implementation was only possible if the appropriate resources and facilities were made available. One respondent stated:

Our school has a big financial commitment in the music program. We have built a reputation for it and students come to the school for it. So we continue to run it with small numbers (in order) to keep it going and attract students to the school. (Kym, KI7, 1/9/2012)

Another consideration involved school reputation and culture. This concerned how the school principal’s vision for the reputation and future development of the school influenced policy and practice (Kara, KI6, 1/9/2012). CSS2 leadership enabled
certain subjects in order to continue to build the reputation of the school. For example, one key person stated that “We attract students because we have a reputation for high results in particular subjects” (Kara, KI6, 1/9/2012). In addition, Kara went on to add, “The school runs specific subjects to cater for the top students to encourage a certain culture within the school”.

The type of students and breadth of subject offerings were also considered. CSS2 offered a large number of subjects across all KLAs in order to both increase student enrolments and address the needs of HSC students. The school leaving age changed to 17 years, which impacted enrolments. Consequently, more students chose to stay at CSS2 which broadened the range of student academic abilities and interests (Kara, KI6, 1/9/2012). However, the school made decisions about which subjects to offer based on the academic ability of students; one key staff member stated, “we have to look after our top kids, they’re the ones we would make a commitment to run a small class for” (Kym, KI7, 1/9/2012).

Consideration was also given to the potential for Year 11 students to discontinue subject enrolment into Year 12. This possibility was important since decisions were made related to which subjects were more likely to experience declining enrolments in Year 12. However, this consideration was not as evident for subjects which were more likely to attract students more successful academically as “…academic students are likely to complete the HSC” (Kym, KI7, 1/9/2012). For example, one respondent said:

The change in leaving age has had a negative impact on subjects because students who don't want to be at school have to be here. They are often disruptive in class and will leave as soon as they can. So you can run a class to suit them, which is small anyway, because you want to meet the needs of the students who are here. Then they leave, and you might be running a class of three or four, which is really expensive. So you end up with lower level subjects, like geography or senior science or even VET. It has a negative impact because these students start but don't finish. But you've got to provide for them when they're here. (Kara, KI6, 1/9/2012)

In addition, the views and experiences of those making subject implementation decisions were influential. One key staff member went on to say:
Principals in past years knew very little about VETiS. Subject implementation decisions are a personal persuasion, based on how much the school leadership know about a particular subject. This affects how much they support it and value VETiS as a subject. Some principals don’t value VETiS at all, or maybe they don’t know anything about it or understand it. Or maybe they just feel that their school should be more academic. Most principals have not been trained in VETiS and what they know they have almost picked up by osmosis. (Kara, KI6, 1/9/2012)

5.6.2 Enabling influences for the implementation of VETiS

Enabling influences for implementation of VETiS at CSS2 included teacher passion for VETiS, qualifications of teachers, the influence of the principal, relevance of the programs, availability of facilities and the threat of losing student enrolments. The first and second enabling influences involved teachers, their passion for teaching VETiS and their qualifications. The qualifications of teachers influenced subjects offered; one key staff member emphasised that “…qualification requirements are a lot more stringent in VETiS subjects as non-VETiS teachers cannot cover a VETiS class if the teacher is absent or leaves” (Keeley, KI5, 19/2012). CSS2 considered the qualifications of existing teachers against the entry criteria for VETiS retraining. If there were willing teachers available with required qualifications the subject would be considered for implementation. The passion and commitment of the teacher was seen as an enabler to subject implementation.

The commitment of the VETiS teacher is important because students work closely with the teacher. It’s very practical and a very close connection. Teachers who are enthusiastic promote the subject within the school. Where there's a really passionate teacher, the numbers are up. Where the teacher doesn't appear to be interested, numbers are down. (Kara, KI6, 1/9/2012)

The third enabling influence at CSS2 was the influence of the principal. The principal at CSS2 was actively involved in subject implementation decisions; one respondent explained that:
How much VETiS is supported and valued by the principal affects implementation, this often comes down to the personal persuasion and beliefs of the principal. Most principals have not been trained in VETiS or have had any experience in this area. Principal involvement in external VETiS committees at this school has broadened the understanding in this area and increased support by the principal.  (Kara, K16, 1/9/2012)

The fourth enabling influence was the availability of facilities and resources. Access to funding to enhance school facilities and financial commitment by the school also enables successful VETiS implementation. This had been an advantage at CSS2, with one key staff member indicating that:

…we were able build new facilities with 1.2 million dollars in government funding and can now implement Construction. This could not be offered before due to lack of facilities and resources, even though we had a qualified passionate teacher.  (Kara, K16, 1/9/2012)

The conditions of funding agreements mandate continued delivery of VETiS which enables ongoing commitment to VETiS (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010c). Trade Training Centre funding enabled an industry-standard facility to be built at CSS2; consequently construction was implemented and must be offered for a set number of years. CSS2 also invested school funds in upgrading existing VETiS facilities; for example, “…we have a commitment to continue running hospitality as the school invested $350,000 to upgrade the room to meet the VETiS requirements” (Kara, K16, 1/9/2012).

A fifth enabling influence at CSS2 for implementing VETiS courses was the threat of losing enrolments due to not meeting the interests or needs of students. One respondent emphasised that “…we had to offer more VETiS as we were losing students to the local public school where those subjects were being offered” (Kara, K16, 1/9/2012).

Relevance of a subject for a student’s post-school life is an additional enabler to the implementation of VETiS. For example, one teacher said:
…traditional subjects were not being seen by students as relevant to their life after school. There is now a big push in education for relevance and traditional subjects don’t deliver that. Whereas VETiS courses do. Students learn skills which are practised in real environments at school which they can then use in future employment. *(Tim, TFG2, 1/9/2012)*

5.6.3 Barriers to the implementation of VETiS

Barriers to VETiS implementation at CSS2 were the school leadership’s aim for the reputation and culture of the school, negative leadership, insufficient staff qualifications and lack of teacher willingness to teach VETiS.

The first barrier to VETiS implementation was the reputation and culture which the leadership was promoting. For example, one key staff member stated, “…We have a reputation for being academically strong in some subject areas. This impacts on enrolments. It attracts students to the school. Therefore we will support those subject areas” *(Kara, KI6, 1/9/2012)*. The reputation of the school had been developed over time due to the success of students in different subjects, although a key staff member indicated that “…these are usually the top level subjects” *(Kym, KI7, 1/9/2012)*.

The second barrier to the implementation of VETiS was leadership. Subject implementation decisions at CSS2 are ultimately made by the Principal and the Curriculum Coordinator *(Kara, KI6, 1/9/2012)*. Their perspectives on education had been influenced by their experience in education *(Kara, KI6, 1/9/2012)*. At CSS2 a negative leadership attitude about the type of student who participates in VETiS was a barrier to implementation; some staff believed that there were some in leadership that stereotyped VETiS students as being those of lower academic ability *(Keeley, KI5, 1/9/2012)*. This was not surprising, since the subject implementation team at CSS2 had traditional education backgrounds, which lacked VETiS experience or training.

VETiS was not viewed by leadership as a stand-alone KLA at CSS2. Coordinators were allocated to each KLA and acknowledged as part of the school leadership. The VETiS coordination role was, however, added to the Technical and Applied Studies coordinators’ duties *(Kara, KI6, Keeley, KI5, 1/9/2012)*.
The lack of staff qualifications was the third barrier to VETiS implementation. In order to teach VETiS there are minimum mandatory qualification requirements staff are required to hold (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015). If staff lack these, courses are unable to be offered:

A major concern for VETiS subjects was the availability of qualified teachers. It is a risk when the school has only one staff member qualified to teach and has committed to running that subject. It can be a very difficult situation if that person leaves as only another qualified person can take that class and retraining takes time. (Keeley, Kl5, 1/9/2012)

A fourth barrier to implementation of VETiS at CSS2 was the willingness of teachers to teach VETiS. The school had teachers who were qualified to teach VETiS; regrettably, some did not wish to teach these subjects. The extra workload involved in delivering a VETiS subjects including the paperwork, assessment and monitoring of work placement had discouraged them from engaging with the VETiS subject area (Tina, Tim, TFG2, 1/9/2012).

5.6.4 Summary Specific Research Question 3

Table 5-12 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS2 Specific Research Question 3, *how do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?*
Table 5-12
CSS2 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision makers</td>
<td>• Team of two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Internal stakeholders: principal, curriculum coordinator, KLA coordinators, school executive, subject teachers and diocesan VETiS adviser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision process</td>
<td>• School reputation and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Facilities and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subjects compatible with student ability and interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling factors</td>
<td>• Risk of certain students not completing Year 12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher passion and enthusiasm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Threat of losing enrolments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>• Staff qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of willingness by teachers to teach VETiS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Leadership vision for the reputation and culture of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negative individuals in leadership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7 Conclusion CSS2

CSS2 promoted a reputation for high academic performance for students seeking university entrance. As such school leaders have previously implemented subjects which appeal to ‘top students’ to attract enrolments. Implementation decisions included running subjects for teachers who had a history of high academic outcomes by students in order to keep the teacher at the school. The school experienced an increased enrolment in Stage 6 as a result of the change in school leaving age to 17. Due to the risk of these students leaving prior to completion of Year 12, CSS2 was more likely to run smaller classes for highly academic students.

CSS2 had seen a continual change in VETiS coordination. The role was added to the role of TAS coordination and career advisor. It was also added to the role of a VETiS teacher. The role did not attract a pecuniary allowance, however time release
was given. This lack of consistency in VETiS leadership could be a potential barrier or enabler to VETiS participation and uptake.

At CSS2, VETiS was perceived to be suitable for students who were less academically able and for those with additional needs. Those students were encouraged to study VETiS because it was more suited to their (lower) academic ability by teachers of non-VETiS subjects. This advice was potentially motivated by teachers not wanting ‘those’ students in their classes. Consequently, in this school VETiS had a reputation for being suitable for less academically capable students. VETiS teachers believed that non-VETiS teachers were ill-informed about the benefits of this subject area and how these subjects contribute to an ATAR score. VETiS teachers believed that the high ATAR contributions of previous students in VETiS classes were gradually lifting the status of VETiS in CSS2.

Students chose VETiS at CSS2 because of post-school employment opportunities and genuine interest in the subject. A barrier to VETiS subject selection was the stereotypical view of VETiS students being of lower academic ability. The timetable was identified as either empowering or disempowering VETiS subject selection. School leadership decisions on which subjects were allocated to which lines on the timetable were identified as either barriers or enablers for VETiS.

Parents, teachers, career advisers and friends were all identified as subject advisers at CSS2. VETiS teachers, parents and friends gave positive advice on the benefits of VETiS in post-school transition and that the student would be more likely to be successful in this subject area. Older students, however, advised students not to study VETiS because of the workload involved in completing assessment requirements.

The role of the career adviser at CSS2 was identified as an influence in subject selection. This school employed a dedicated career adviser (0.8FTE) who was actively involved in subject information dissemination processes. This school mandated a compulsory parent/teacher interview with school staff as part of the subject selection process. The way language was used in written advice at CSS2 was identified as a potential barrier; the description of Category B courses being less
academically rigorous supported the reputation of VETiS being suited for less academically able students.

Subject implementation decisions at this school were made by two people and informed by other school stakeholders. Final subject implementation decisions, however, were made by the principal and the curriculum coordinator. These staff had no previous VETiS teaching experience, however the principal had participated in external groups to gain further understanding. Stakeholders at CSS2 indicated that support for VETiS from leadership was influenced by the individual’s preferences and beliefs about school education.

A major enabler for VETiS implementation was identified as the commitment of the principal to resourcing industry-standard facilities with school funds and to seeking external funding to support this area. At CSS2, Trade Training Centre funding provided industry-standard facilities to promote increased participation in VETiS.

The data collected at CSS2 provided insights into issues, enablers and barriers relating to the implementation and uptake of VETiS at this school. The experiences of CSS1 and CSS2 were reflected upon when conducting research at CSS3. While the main interview questions remained the same at each school, probe questions were employed to further understand salient influences. It was important to this research to identify similarities and differences among schools to explain the variations between schools in the uptake and implementation of VETiS.
CHAPTER 6: Findings—Case Site School 3

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from Case Site School 3 (CSS3). The first section describes the school, participation in VETiS and leadership history of the school (Section 6.2). The following sections present the research analysis and data coding which initially stemmed from influences identified in the conceptual framework synthesised in Chapter 2. Codes generated from the literature review (see Table 3-4, Table 3-5, Table 3-6) were linked to specific questions which identified themes to explain influences which affected the implementation and uptake of VETiS (Sections 6.4.4, 6.5.4, 6.6.4).

- Section 6.4 discusses Specific Research Question 3: What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?
- Section 6.5 discusses Specific Research Question 2: What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
- Section 6.6 discusses Specific Research Question 3: How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?

6.2 CSS3 context

CSS3 is located in rural NSW and is a regional comprehensive co-educational Catholic secondary school with an enrolment of between 750-850 students. At the time of this study this school had an above average Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA), according to ACARA’s (n.d.) My School website (ACARA n.d., 2013). The ICSEA score is made up of student factors such as parent education and occupation, together with school factors of geographic location and proportion of indigenous students. The school had a lower than average socio-economic status for non-government NSW schools (Department of Education and Training, 2018). SES is a measure of a school community’s economic and social position in relation to other schools. Although these are 2018 data they are indicative of the profile of the school at the time of the study in 2012. Table 6-1 summarises the school profile for CSS3.
### CSS3 school profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School sector</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School type</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year range</td>
<td>7-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)</td>
<td>1010-1020 (average ICSEA 1000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous students</td>
<td>1-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language background Other than English</td>
<td>0-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic Status (SES)</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Average for NSW non-government schools is 107)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** (ACARA n.d., 2013; Department of Education and Training, 2018)

CSS3 experienced a consistent record of high VETiS participation between 2005 and 2013. The numbers were particularly high in 2011 when it peaked at 57.30%. In 2011, 57.30% of all students in Stage 6 participated in the four VETiS subjects that were offered. Offering of VETiS courses and enrolment by Stage 6 students increased over the nine-year period shown in Table 6-2.

In 2013, this school conducted four different VETiS courses in which student participation represented 46.08% of all Stage 6 enrolments (NSW Board of Studies, 2013). This participation rate is higher than both state (31.85%) and Catholic school (34%) participation rates for that year (Catholic Schools NSW, 2019; NSW Board of Studies, 2013).
Table 6-2
CSS3 implementation and participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Year 11</th>
<th>Year 12</th>
<th>All Stage 6</th>
<th>Year 12 No. VETiS courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the nine-year period shown in Table 6-2, the same principal led the school. In contrast, over the same period there were three different people leading VETiS. The principal was a qualified secondary teacher and had completed further training in VETiS in order to acquire appropriate certification to teach vocational education subjects. Three VETiS coordinators (all with VETiS experience) had supported VETiS implementation and participation. The school leaving age increased to 17 in 2010 and there were two changes in staff performing the role of career adviser. Staff believed that the principal’s experience in VETiS and the changes in VETiS coordination influenced the trends identified above (Kate, KL8, 14/11/2012).

The VETiS coordinator was influential in promoting VETiS interests, by supporting VETiS staff with compliance issues. VETiS was considered as a KLA at CSS3 and had a designated VETiS coordinator. However, unlike other KLAs this position did not attract remuneration. The lack of extra remuneration was a concern, as Tally noted:

The position attracts 0.1 time release and no extra pay due to the numbers involved in VETiS compared to other KLAs, however the extra work involved in compliance is not considered in this, other KLA areas don’t have to do that.

(Tally, TFG3 14/11/2012)
Staff believed the workload involved in VETiS coordination and lack of equity in conditions influenced the willingness of staff to take up this role. Staff also believed the role of VETiS coordinator was “for those silly enough to take it on” (Tony, TFG3 14/11/2012).

The consistently high participation and implementation rates in CSS3 were influenced by the commitment of leadership to VETiS. The principal’s enthusiasm as a trained VETiS teacher contributed to this commitment; for example, Kate said:

…the principal believed that VETiS training allowed teachers to add another string to their bow and a different dimension to learning and teaching with kids. The principal who was a teacher at the time also participated in VETiS teacher training and was keen to teach it. (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012)

Data collection at CSS3 involved document analysis, student and parent surveys, a focus group with VETiS teachers and semi-structured interviews with school key personnel. Table 6-3 shows the codes used related to each data collection strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Group</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Student survey</td>
<td>Tally, Terry, Tia, Tiffany, Tayler, Taytum, Tegan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parent survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS Teachers</td>
<td>TFG</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Key Personnel</td>
<td>KI</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Document</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3 Analysis

The research analysis and data coding initially stemmed from influences identified in the conceptual framework synthesised in Chapter 2. Other codes were developed
inductively by an iterative process involving pattern identification. Codes were linked to specific questions which identified themes to explain behaviours and considerations related to the implementation and uptake of VETiS in CSS3. A synopsis of findings is presented in Sections 6.4.4, 6.5.4 and 6.6.4 which outline the codes and emergent themes found in the data.

6.4 CSS3 Specific Research Question 1

Data revealed three themes emerging in response to the first research question, what influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects? These themes are presented in Table 6-4 and are further discussed in this section.

Table 6-4
CSS3 understandings, Specific Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Understandings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6.4.1 Information to students and parent advice | • School processes for disseminating subject information.  
• How VETiS programs address parent expectation. |
| 6.4.2 Reasons for subject selection         | • Differing reasons different subjects.  
• Social aspects of schooling.  
• Differences in understandings of teachers/leadership and students.  
• School demographics. |
| 6.4.3 Enablers and barriers for VETiS subject choice | • VETiS  
• SBAT  
• TVET |

6.4.1 Information to students and parental influence

Two aspects influence student and parental decisions concerning VETiS subject choice. They are:

• how information concerning VETiS is disseminated to students; and
• how VETiS programs address parent expectations.
6.4.1.1 School processes for disseminating HSC subject selection information

Year 10 to 11 subject information practices offer to students, and parents, information about the Higher School Certificate, ATAR and subject selection. School leadership personnel planned how these practices were conducted, and by whom, and the amount of information concerning each subject area presented.

Information evenings for students and parents were conducted by the curriculum coordinator and career adviser. The Board of Studies Liaison Officer (BOSLO) was invited “to give an unbiased view of all subjects and ensure the school did not push subjects of preference” (Kate, K18, 14/11/2012). The BOSLO presented factual information about the performance of all subjects in the HSC; this information showed that VETiS subjects could have a positive impact on an ATAR score. In addition, subject handbooks were issued. These were intended to amplify information provided at the information evening. VETiS courses were advertised alongside all other subject areas; one key staff member emphasised that “it is very fair, all subjects are presented equally and VETiS is embedded in the delivery of the HSC at this school” (Kassie, K19, 14/11/2012).

A session was conducted prior to the information evening where all KLA coordinators and teachers were present. This session aimed to offer students and parents an opportunity to ask questions about subjects of interest. All subject teachers conducted student seminars for approximately twenty minutes during school time. “VETiS teachers are active participants in showcasing subjects, and VETiS had the same time allocation for presentations as other subjects”, said one key staff member (Kassie, K19, 14/11/2012). Individual career adviser interviews were also available upon request.

There was consensus that teachers of other subjects at CSS3 were supportive of VETiS and considered it as an equal subject at the school and suited to all students. For example, one key staff member said:
At the parent information night we promote VETiS subjects as suitable for all students. We don’t hide that, an example is a previous student, a very bright student. She had an ATAR of 97 and she had a VETiS subject in there. They can do it. They can all do it. Hospitality tends to scale very well on the ATAR. 

(Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012)

6.4.1.2 How VETiS programs address parent expectation

Parent expectation was said to influence the advice they gave regarding subject choice. The advice parents gave may have also been based on their own experiences of secondary school education, and familiarity with traditional subjects. One key staff member felt that this could be a negative influence and said, “some parents have a huge influence in a negative way. They want their student to do advanced maths, chemistry and physics because they have done it or they wanted to and didn’t” (Kendra, KI10, 14/11/2012). Another stated that, “some parents are stuck in the traditional mindset in relation to subject choices” (Kim, KI11, 14/11/2012).

Parent expectation regarding the future career path of their child may have influenced subject advice given. Teachers believed that in some cases parents’ expectations for their child were influenced by the fees being paid for non-government schooling. For example, one key staff member said:

Parent have expectations of what they want their kids to do when they finish school, especially when they are paying fees for non-government education, and then that affects the subjects they want them to do. (Kassie, KI9, 14/11/2012)

Parent expectation at CSS3 was also related to the relevance and post-school benefits of the education provided. One teacher said, “parents see school education as the key to getting a decent job” (Tia, TFG3, 25/2/2012). Another reinforced this by saying: “parents would rather their kid in school doing something productive (VETiS) than being on the dole, until they get some sort of employment” (Terry, TFG3, 25/2/2012).

When making the decision of which school they wanted their children to attend, key school personnel stated that parents had expectations regarding subjects offered. Parents expected certain subjects to be offered, and these are more likely to be the traditional subjects; one key staff member said, “parents don’t have the same
expectations for VETiS subjects, the subjects they are expect are the traditional ones” (Kate, K18, 14/11/2012).

6.4.2 Reasons for subject choices

In phase 1 of the research process, a student survey (N=88) was conducted at CSS3 where students indicated their subject choices and ranked how influential each listed reason was for each subject chosen. The list of reasons was developed from interviews and surveys with teachers, parents and students in the pilot phase of this research. The ranking used a Likert like scale ranging from extremely important (4) to not important (0). Table 6-5 shows median scores of students’ reasons for subject choice at CSS3.

Table 6-5 shows that subject choice was influenced by all of the fifteen reasons in each subject to varying degrees. Different reasons were likely to influence VETiS subject choice compared to non-VETiS subjects. Figure 6-1 diagrammatically presents the influences more or less likely to influence VETiS than non-VETiS subjects at CSS3. A ranking of 3.0 or above (important/very important) was deemed to be a major reason. Rankings of less than 1.6 had little influence over subject choices.

The major reasons likely to influence choice of VETiS than non-VETiS subjects at CSS3 were:

- 1—Genuine interest (VETiS 3.43/non-VETiS 3.13),
- 2—Being good at this subject (VETiS 3.29/non-VETiS 2.92),
- 5—Useful for future career intent (VETiS 3.43/non-VETiS 2.74),
- 6—Skills for personal life (VETiS 3.46/non-VETiS 2.85),
- 7—Looks good on my HSC (VETiS 3.34/non-VETiS 2.77),
- 8—Subject is good for resume (VETiS 3.48/non-VETiS 2.72), and
- 13—Might help to get a job (VETiS 3.47/non-VETiS 2.63).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Selection Influence</th>
<th>VET Construction</th>
<th>VET Hospitality</th>
<th>VET Metals &amp; Engineering (M&amp;E)</th>
<th>Tafe delivered VET (TVET) School Based Apprenticeship/Traineeship (SBAT)</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Religious Education</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Sciences</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Community &amp; Family Studies (CAFS)</th>
<th>Content Endorsed Course</th>
<th>Personal Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)</th>
<th>Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE)</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Creative Arts</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>All VETiS</th>
<th>All non-VETiS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Genuinely interested in this subject</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - I am good at this subject</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - This subject is good for my ATAR</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - This subject is a pre-requisite for future study</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - This subject is useful for career intent</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - This subject will give me skills for my personal life</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - This subject looks good on my HSC</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - This subject is good for my resume</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - My friends are in this class</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - I like the teacher</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - It was the only subject on the line that was suitable</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 - This subject was easier than other subjects on this line</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - This subject might help me get a job</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - Done this subject before and enjoyed it</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - Subject has a reputation for achieving high results in the HSC exam</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students were more likely to be influenced by friends being in the class. Other influences included liking their teacher, the subject being perceived as easier or it being the only suitable subject. There were no influences more likely to impact on non-VETiS subject selection than VETiS subject selection indicated at CSS3.

Some teachers and leadership believed that students were more likely to choose subjects because they like or dislike particular teachers; for example, one key staff member said “…students know who is teaching and vote with their feet” (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012). Another emphasised, “if the teachers are passionate and excited about their subjects the kids pick them because they know they will be taught by someone with commitment” (Kim, KI11, 14/11/2012). In addition a teacher commented that “students are attracted to VETiS as they have seen what the teacher has done with other students” (Tally, TFG3, 14/11/2012).
In contrast, other teachers and staff believed that students chose VETiS because of career opportunities and the skills they believed they might learn. Staff indicated that academically-inclined students chose VETiS because they perceived it to be different from theory-based learning in traditional subjects; one key staff member said, “the academic kids choose VETiS because they want something different, and see the skills can be used as they work their way to bigger goals” (Kim, KI11 14/11/2012). For the non-academic students, VETiS was identified as an opportunity to succeed; one key staff member said, “VETiS teaches kids a work ethic, it meets the needs of kids who aren’t brilliant academics who can leave the school with a secondary piece of paper, a Certificate II” (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012). One teacher noted that “students are more likely to choose VETiS as they can see it as a useful life skill” (Tony, 14/11/2012).

The visibility of VETiS within the school was also believed to help future students understand the benefits of VETiS and the quality of the vocational skills offered. One teacher said:

VETiS has a good reputation in terms of enjoyment and the current students give good feedback. Future students see current students dressed in industry uniforms and using their skills at functions or on school grounds. This visibility lifts VETiS up on a pedestal, they see how professional that student is and the fun they are having while learning. (Tally, TFG3, 14/11/2012)

6.4.3 Enablers and barriers for VETiS subject choice

In the next two sections enablers and barriers for VETiS subject selection are discussed. These are shown in Table 6-6.
Table 6-6

*CSS3 enablers/barriers for VETiS subject selection*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enablers that could encourage students to choose VETiS</th>
<th>Barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Equal status with other subject areas culture in school.</td>
<td>1. ATAR rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Timetable—VETiS on all lines.</td>
<td>2. Work placement absences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Range of VETiS subjects on multiple timetable lines.</td>
<td>3. Misinformation about VETiS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Learning preference practical.</td>
<td>4. Poor experiences of SBAT previous students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Real world feel of VETiS and employability skills.</td>
<td>5. Lack of promotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. VETiS is different to usual traditional school subjects.</td>
<td>6. Opportunities for TVET.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.3.1 Enablers that could encourage students to choose VETiS

Six enabling influences for VETiS subject selection are now discussed. The first enabler for internally delivered VETiS at CSS3 was the school leadership promotion of a culture within the school that supports VETiS subjects having equal status to other subject areas. One key staff member emphasised that “VETiS is considered to have equal status to other subjects, and no subject is seen as more important than any other” (*Kate, K18, 14/11/2012*). School leadership and advisory processes promoted VETiS subjects as being relevant for students of all academic levels. VETiS was promoted as being useful to students intending both university and employment pathways post-school. For example, two staff members said:

Students who want to go to university to do civil engineering are attracted to VETiS metals and engineering, this gives them skills and they really enjoy it. Staff see VETiS as having really positive outcomes employment opportunities. (*Terry, TFG3, 14/11/2012*).
At the parent subject information night we say that a VETiS subject can suit all students. We don’t hide that, but a very bright student may be concerned about the effect on the ATAR. I give the example of a student from two years ago. She had an ATAR of 97 and she had a VETiS subject in there. VETiS is a great subject area for all students, those who are academically inclined and those who aren’t. Hospitality tends to scale very well on the ATAR. It does better than some of the other non-VETiS subjects. (Kate, KI8, 22/12/2012)

The second enabling influence was access, as VETiS was offered on every timetable line at CSS3. Students were able to choose multiple VETiS courses; one key staff member explained that “…having VETiS on every line really opened up the choices for students, especially those who don’t intend going to university” (Kassie, KI9, 14/11/2012). One teacher indicated that leadership decisions related to timetabling had the potential to steer subject delivery according to their preference; CSS3 timetabling processes encouraged VETiS selection. For example, one teacher said:

Leadership decisions relating to how the timetable is constructed may have the potential to divert the curriculum, this school offers VETiS on every subject line which demonstrates the value the leadership team has for VETiS. (Terry, TFG3, 14/11/2012)

A third enabler was the broad range of VETiS subjects offered at CSS3. Indeed, some VETiS subjects were offered on more than one line. Offering the same subject on a range of lines allowed students increased flexibility and choice. This resulted in multiple classes of the same VETiS subject being conducted on different timetable lines. Students at CSS3 were not limited in their VETiS subject choice by school rules. Consequently, according to a key staff member, “many students choose two and in some cases three VETiS subjects, especially those not seeking an ATAR” (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012).

A fourth enabler of VETiS subject selection in CSS3 was the reputation it had for offering practical learning opportunities that students appreciated and enjoyed. One teacher said, “VETiS has a great reputation for being fun, students learn good skills which are very practical” (Tally, TFG3, 14/11/2012).

A fifth enabler was the industry skills students learned in VETiS and the relationship to student employment opportunities. Industry skills and the employability skills
embedded in VETiS subjects enabled VETiS selection. The skills learned and the qualifications gained were attractive to students as they appreciated the opportunities and relevance in post-school transition (Kendra, KI10, 14/11/2012). One key staff member said, “some students choose VETiS because they want to follow the associated industry area pathway post-school while others intend using the qualifications to gain part-time positions while studying at university” (Kim, KI11, 14/11/2012). Students confirmed this in student survey data (figure 6-1). Other teachers reinforced this by saying:

Students are learning real skills, and employers want people with workplace skills who have been assessed as competent in those skills. VETiS makes our kids more employable. (Tia, TFG3, 14/11/2012)

Students who get a Certificate II have more opportunities to pursue a passion in the VETiS area whether it is hospitality, construction or metals engineering. Students learn employability skills in their training and work placements. Their certificate can give them recognition of prior learning if they choose to go on in that area. Students want that real-life experience which most students don’t get until they leave school. VETiS holds a very important place and I think the more VETiS the better. (Kendra, KI10, 14/11/2012)

A sixth enabling influence for VETiS selection was that these subjects were different to other more traditional subjects. One key staff member described VETiS as being “something a bit left-field, completely different to the usual sciences and maths etc.” (Kim, KI11, 14/11/2012). She went on to explain that the skills gained could be used by students intending a university pathway, “they could work in a pub whilst they are doing a uni degree”.

Six influences enabled VETiS selection at CSS3, these were identified through staff and teacher interviews. These included its equal status with other subject areas, supportive school culture, timetable structure, student learning preferences, the usefulness of VETiS in helping students gain employability skills and that it was different to traditional subjects.
6.4.3.2 Barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS

Five barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS are now discussed. The first barrier to VETiS subject selection was the rule of allowing a maximum of one VETiS subject to contribute to an ATAR. There was consensus among those interviewed that this restriction set by the Board of Studies and the University Admissions Centre (UAC) discouraged enrolment in multiple VETiS subjects. For example, one teacher stated:

Only one VETiS subject counts towards an ATAR, we have students who want an ATAR who do two VETiS subjects but only one can count. Students wanting an ATAR are discouraged at this school to do three because of they would not have enough units. (Tia, TFG3, 14/11/2012)

The second barrier concerned the problem of student absence when they were involved in VETiS. Because of their attendance at mandated work placement, students were absent from school for 35 hours per year of study. Indeed, this was exacerbated because of limited local industry employers, which resulted in class placements being conducted over extended periods of time. Teachers explained:

We have big classes and limited local employers in each industry therefore our work placements are over two weeks, with half of the students going one week and the other the next, the disruptions to other classes are for a double amount of time. (Tally, TG3, 14/11/2012)

We don’t encourage students to do more than two VETiS subjects because there is too much work placement, they are never here and they lose that continuity of school. (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012)

Such absences may have negative influences on HSC results as students were required to catch up in other subjects. Non-VETiS teachers were concerned about the disruption to their subject content delivery and the extra support they needed to provide to ensure VETiS students were able to keep up with work missed. One teacher said:
Non-VETiS teachers will remind kids that they have to catch up on other work if they do VETiS because of the work placement, and advise them not to do VETiS. This is unfair as other subjects also cause absences from classes with their excursions and activities. (*Terry, TFG3, 14/11/2012*)

A third barrier was misinformation provided to students about VETiS subjects from non-VETiS teachers. Misinformation usually revolved around VETiS subjects’ (poor) value to the ATAR score. The perception of VETiS being of little value to the ATAR was dispelled by staff emphasising that VETiS students regularly achieve results in Band 6 or 5 (which are the two highest achievements in the HSC examination), and these results were important in those students’ ATAR scores (*Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012*). One VETiS teacher emphasised this by saying:

> I think sometimes students are misinformed in regards to subject choices. The only people who misinform are those who do not teach VETiS. Until we get more VETiS people in executive-based positions, this misinformation will continue. It’s a biased view, in my opinion. I think VETiS threatens the perceived rigour of the school. I blame in some ways the government website of schools online, where schools are lined up with ATARs, this seems to be the way schools are judged. It does not recognise the value of the VETiS qualifications that students are achieving in the same way. (*Tally, TFG3, 14/11/2012*)

A fourth barrier was the poor experiences of previous students who had commenced an SBAT. The disruption to schooling in other subject areas contributed to these negative experiences together with the potential for the SBAT arrangement to be ended prior to HSC completion through employer or student decision (*Kassie, KI9, 14/11/2012*). Kassie noted that if an SBAT was cancelled during the two-year period of the HSC it would jeopardise the students’ potential for achieving the HSC certificate due to insufficient units for eligibility (*NSW Board of Studies, 2013*). The reasons for a student to choose to end an SBAT were said to include confusion about responsibilities, as well as issues of identity and belonging. One key staff member voiced concern about the potential for students to lose a sense of where they ‘fit in’, stating that “the students don’t really know whether they fit at school or at work, and there is a mismatch of who to answer to” (*Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012*).

Lack of promotion of TVET at CSS3 was the fifth barrier. One teacher said “we don’t have students wanting to do these as often because we don’t give them information
about them” (Kassie, K19, 14/11/2012). She also identified a sixth barrier as the limited variety of TVET courses on offer at the local TAFE campus, saying “we offer a lot of VETiS courses, the TAFE does not offer very much, therefore it’s never been popular” (Kassie, K19, 14/11/2012).

Six barriers were identified that could discourage students from selecting VETiS at CSS3. They were rules related to ATAR, student absences, misinformation, poor SBAT history, lack of TVET promotion and opportunity.

6.4.4 Summary Specific Research Question 1

Table 6-7 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS3 Specific Research Question 1 that asked, *what influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?*
### Table 6-7

*CSS3 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| School processes and structure of planned subject information dissemination | - Information evening with parents; subject handbook; subject showcase; teachers advising; interviews available on request with or without parents; peer influence; parent advice and career advice.  
- How VETiS addresses parent expectation. |
| Reasons for subject choice | - Useful or future career intent.  
- Might help get a job.  
- Good for resume.  
- Skills for personal life.  
- Being good at it.  
- Genuine interest.  
- Looks good on the HSC. |
| Enabling factors influencing subject choice for VETiS | - Equal status with other subject areas (suited to all); culture in school; timetable—VETiS on all lines; VETiS subjects on multiple timetable lines; practical learning preferences; real world feel of VETiS with employability skills and different to traditional subjects. |
| Factors which create a barrier for VETiS subject choice who, what, why | - ATAR rules; work placement absences; misinformation; poor previous experiences SBAT; lack of promotion and opportunities for TVET. |

#### 6.5 CSS3 Specific Research Question 2

An analysis of the data generated the following issues which structure the presentation of findings for CSS3, Specific Research Question 2, *what information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?* Table 6-8 shows the understandings and themes for Specific Research Question 2.
### 6.5.1 School subject advisory processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understandings about information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- School practices to guide subject selection and marketing VETiS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Which practices most valued by students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Career advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Advice and advisers for and against VETiS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.5.2 Advisers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understandings about information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Influence of key advisers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Motivation of advisers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Type and extent of advice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.5.3 Written information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understandings about information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Subject information handbook:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Information about VETiS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Amount of information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Language used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- VETiS costs and rules.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### 6.5.1 Subject advisory process

There were various advisory processes which guided students and their parents in subject choices at CSS3. Formal processes included an information evening with parents. Subject seminars were also conducted to explain the content of the various subjects. In addition each student was issued with a written subject information handbook. The handbooks explained each subject and any additional costs involved. Informal processes included interviews with the career adviser and the invitation to engage in personal discussions with teachers.

Information evenings offered general information to parents and students about the HSC. Information was presented by KLA coordinators (including the VETiS coordinator), the curriculum coordinator, principal, and career adviser. Before attendance at information evenings, students and parents were invited to meet with KLA coordinators and teachers. The career adviser presented at information
evenings on subject selection strategies. The career adviser also involved the VETiS coordinator in this presentation to “promote VETiS and the positive outcomes such as certificates” (Kendra, KL10, 14/11/2012). CSS3 invited the Board of Studies Liaison Officer (BOSLO) to present at the subject information night because:

This gives an unbiased view of all subjects, and limits the potential of the information being presented to promote subjects inequitably based on internal preferences. Parents get a better overview of the HSC. The BOSLO shows how each subject really contributes to the HSC and also the ATAR. (Kate, KL8, 14/11/2012)

CSS3 also conducted subject information seminars where teachers were given 20 minutes to present their subjects. Students nominated which seminars they would attend. One key staff member explained, “VETiS teachers are active participants in the seminars and promote their subject, each subject is given equal time, it is fairly distributed between every subject” (Kassie, KL9, 14/11/2012).

Although school processes offered a range of subject advice and information strategies, students surveyed valued individual/personal contact more highly than advice offered through group presentations. In particular they valued individual interviews with the school career adviser (both with and without parents being present) more than other experiences of gaining subject information and advice. Group presentations from subject teachers or from previous students sharing their experiences and written information in handbooks were less important to students (Figure 6-2).
Specifically, helpful subject selection advice about whether to study VETiS subjects or not originated from teachers, employers, parents, siblings and friends (Table 6-9). Less than 10% of students surveyed were advised to study VETiS. This advice came from teachers, parents, employers and friends. The advice included the potential for direct employment offers, support for future job applications, being with friends, enjoyment, and the opportunity to gain valuable skills and experience. Less than 4% of students were advised not to study VETiS. This advice came from parents, siblings and teachers. The advice not to study VETiS concerned the ATAR score, the value of 'smart' subjects and VETiS not being 'useful'.
Table 6-9
CSS3 student survey response advice specific to VETiS subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject advice specific to VETiS subjects</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Nature of Advice Given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students who were advised to study VETiS and did.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Subject teacher; employers; teacher from another subject; friend.</td>
<td>Job offer if student undertakes course; it will help get an apprenticeship; good skills gained; a worthwhile course.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who were advised to study VETiS and did NOT.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Friends; parents.</td>
<td>It would be fun to do together; good for future employment; hands-on skills and experience; good at it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students advised NOT to study VETiS and did NOT.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Parents; siblings; teachers.</td>
<td>Should do 'smart' subjects; VET will harm ATAR; not useful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students advised NOT to do a VETiS subject and DID.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6-3 shows each subject area and student acknowledgement of advice provided for each subject chosen. Of interest is that students received less subject advice about VETiS than other subjects.
Parents and teachers were key advisers available to students in the process of subject choice. The type, extent and motivation underpinning the advice varied.

Subject advice by parents was an important part of the subject decision-making process, according to school staff. Over 37% of students surveyed acknowledged that parents had advised them about subjects they had chosen. Staff at CSS3 believed that parents were a major influence in their children’s choice of subjects. Staff felt that as parents paid fees for their children to attend they were more inclined to voice an opinion. The reason for this was because they wanted to see ‘value for money’, which may be indicated by their child’s educational success (Kassie, KI19, 14/11/2012). In addition, many parents’ advice was based on their own expectations for their children’s future. Moreover, school staff believed some parent expectations were not always realistic. One key staff member explained:

I think parents’ expectations about their sons and daughters are sometimes a little bit unrealistic. They'll push them into chemistry and physics when they would be far better off doing senior science and maybe hospitality or senior science and construction. Parents like the idea of the prestige of a career related to university education rather than a trade. (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012)
Staff believed that parents’ advice was based on their personal understandings and experiences of education. Staff also believed that “some parents are stuck in the traditional mindset when thinking about HSC subjects” (Kim, KI11, 22/12/2012). A key staff member explained:

Some parents have a huge influence often in a negative way regarding VETiS, they want their student to do advanced maths, chemistry and physics because maybe they have done it or they want to. (Kendra, KI10, 14/11/2012)

Not surprisingly, teachers were identified as primary advisers for subject choices also. Staff believed that the majority of teachers at CSS3 are supportive of VETiS subjects and their benefits. Information given at the subject information night aimed to clarify the preconceived ideas of parents and students related to VETiS and the ATAR score. One key staff member claimed that “some students get fed misinformation about VETiS, which they then share, which then needs to be corrected” (Kassie, KI9, 14/11/2012).

Career adviser guidance through individual interviews was another source of advice valued by students. The career adviser role was “growing exponentially” at CSS3 (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012). The career adviser position was combined with a teacher role, meaning that there was time release allocation without salary allocation. CSS3 leadership acknowledged the expertise required in this role by supporting the teacher to access professional development in postgraduate qualifications in career development. The time release allocation increased between 2010 and 2013 (Kim, KI11, 14/11/2012). However, it was believed by another staff member that the role of career adviser was not fully recognised. A key staff member said:

The role description of the career adviser does not adequately cover the range of duties and responsibilities. The career adviser was disheartened and considering not continuing in the role. The principal is in the process of revising the role. There are differences between schools in the time allocations given, this school offers 0.3 time release, whereas other schools of a similar size are 0.7 or 0.8. This is inequitable as the career adviser role in schools is getting bigger and bigger. (Kendra, KI10, 14/11/2012)
6.5.3 Written information

The subject information handbook included detailed information concerning each VETiS subject offered. It was presented using Board of Studies templates. Because specific information to prospective students about VETiS is a requirement of ASQA accreditation, such templates ensure all required information was documented. The researcher found that the language used in written VETiS information was clear and factual in accordance with compliance requirements for accredited courses, according to the VET standards.

CSS3 clearly communicated information concerning additional fees related to each VETiS course in the subject handbook. There was limited information regarding provision through TVET or SBAT opportunities. However, the handbook did explain TAFE external delivery of VETiS. Information regarding SBATs was limited to internally-delivered VETiS subjects.

6.5.4 Summary Specific Research Question 2

Table 6-10 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS3 Specific Research Question 2 that asked, *What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?*
Table 6-10

CSS3 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisory processes</td>
<td>• Information evening with parents—teachers available to provide information on subjects; career adviser presents; BOSLO presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Invited to meet with KLA coordinators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information seminars for each subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Written handbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interviews with career adviser available on request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of advice</td>
<td>• Parents; VETiS teachers; non-VETiS teachers; career adviser; because:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Fun to do together; good for future; hands-on skills/experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Should do ‘smart’ subjects; not useful; will harm ATAR score.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written information</td>
<td>• Subject information handbook:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o BOS template.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Clear and factual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Limited information about SBAT or TVET.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6 CSS3 Specific Research Question 3

An analysis of the data generated the following issues which structure the presentation of findings for CSS3 Specific Research Question 3, how do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools? Table 6-11 shows the foci used by the researcher to analyse Specific Research Question 3.
Table 6-11

CSS3 understandings, Specific Research Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.6.1 Subject implementation processes</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.2 Enabling influences for the implementation of VETiS</td>
<td>Enabler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.3 Barriers to the implementation of VETiS</td>
<td>Barrier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6.1 Subject implementation processes

Subject implementation decisions were made by a team of seven at CSS3. This team included the principal and the executive team. The primary influences that motivated leadership decisions on subject implementation included school reputation, staff qualifications, student interest, providing subjects that address balance obligations, providing subjects suitable for all students and competition with other schools for student enrolment (Figure 6-4).

Figure 6-4 CSS3 subject implementation influences

Consequently, subject implementation decision-making at CSS3 involved six considerations. The first consideration related to building and maintaining the school reputation (Kendra, KI10, 14/11/2012). It was believed that a school with a credible
reputation tended to increase enrolments (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012). The school leadership team was influenced by the Carmichael Report (Carmichael, 1992) when making curriculum decisions; according to one key staff member the report emphasised “…that students needed to leave school with skills that would make them employable” (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012). Interesting to this research, this was the only school where the government policy around VETiS was identified as a consideration when implementing VETiS.

The second influence concerned staff qualifications and enthusiasm. Staff at CSS3 responded to an annual questionnaire inviting them to register future teaching interests, qualifications and preferences (Kassie, KI9, 14/11/2012). Teacher enthusiasm, subject history and willingness to teach the subject underpinned subject implementation decisions; one teacher said:

…implementation of VETiS has been based on teachers, teacher qualifications and the subject history in the school. When teachers are enthusiastic, have the benchmark qualifications and are willing to retrain in a VETiS subject then leadership will consider offering it. (Kassie, KI9, 14/11/2012)

The third consideration was student interest. One teacher explained that “…student interest determines which subjects continue to run” (Kim, 14/11/2012).

Balance was a consideration that influenced subject implementation decisions at CSS3. Gender balance was a concern, as one key staff member explained “the ratio of boys to girls in the cohort can make a difference as some subjects are viewed as ‘boys’ subjects and others are ‘girls’ subjects” (Kim, KI11, 14/11/2012). ‘Balance’ in the curriculum was central to decisions made by the leadership team at CSS3: “…it is balance, gender balance, staffing balance, time balance, academic balance—all of these are considered” (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012).

The fifth consideration was providing subjects which “…meet the needs of most students” (Kassie, KI9, 14/11/2012). CSS3 introduced subjects to the curriculum with the aim of encouraging students to remain at the school: “…we try to address the

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6Carmichael Report was a 1992 landmark report of the Employment and Skills Formation Council which addressed Australia’s training needs. See [http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A34192](http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A34192)
student as a whole, not just the academics” (Kendra, KI10, 14/11/2012). A teacher explained:

If we don’t offer VETiS subjects, how can we meet the needs of all students? How do we improve their employment opportunity? How can we say we are doing the best for our kids? Subjects which were held in high regard in the past such as physics and economics are not seen by employers as relevant—employers want real skills! If schools continue to make decisions based on what is best for the school, and not the student, kids will end up on the unemployment line and the school will have done nothing for them in reality. (Terry, TFG3, 14/11/2012)

The sixth consideration concerned competition for enrolments. CSS3 considered the trends in other schools; a key staff member said that “by seeing what other schools are offering our school can keep up and attract students” (Kassie, KI9, 14/11/2012). Parents and students considered the full suite of subjects offered when deciding which school to attend. CSS3 recognised that the subjects offered in the school needed to address the interest and preferences of students and parents, in order to be the preferred school for enrolment.

6.6.2 Enabling influences for the implementation of VETiS

There were five identifiable enabling influences related to implementation of VETiS at CSS3. These included the availability and accessibility of VETiS on the timetable, the passion of the principal and teachers, the reputation of VETiS within the school, teacher qualifications and Catholic ethos.

The first enabling influence involved providing multiple opportunities to select subjects on the timetable. A key staff member commented that by offering “…a VETiS course on every line of the timetable, students can have more opportunities to select their preferred range of subjects. VETiS courses are spread across the timetable, this allows students to choose one, two or three VETiS subjects” (Kim, KI11, 14/11/2012).

Leadership at CSS3 used the timetable to make VETiS subjects accessible to students. It also offered multiple lines for historically popular VETiS subjects. These practices allowed students more choices and opportunities to study subjects which
interested them. Consequently, more than one class of popular VETiS subjects was available to students. CSS3 had historically conducted two or three classes of VETiS hospitality each year, as well as two VETiS metals classes (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012).

The second enabling influence was the passion of both the principal and VETiS teachers; a key staff member stated that “…VETiS is successful at this school due to the enthusiasm and passion of the VETiS teachers” (Kassie, KI9, 14/11/2012). At CSS3 the principal was a former VETiS teacher who enthusiastically supported VETiS. Teachers acknowledged this as an enabling influence, with one teacher saying:

We are fortunate that our principal has prior experience in VETiS and is interested in it. Most principals have had university education only and do not really understand the benefits of VETiS, the quality of the teaching and assessment methods, or the wealth of experience and skills developed by the students. (Tally, TFG3, 14/11/2012)

The third enabling influence related to the reputation of VETiS within the school. One teacher said, “VETiS has a good reputation in terms of enjoyment, skills and practical learning activities” (Tia, TFG3, 14/11/2012). There was consensus among those interviewed about this enabler, with one key staff member saying:

VETiS has a solid reputation for being a valuable subject for all students. This reputation has been built by the enthusiasm of VETiS teachers, enjoyment by students and success by previous students—both in employment outcomes and ATAR contribution. (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012)

The fourth influence enabling VETiS was the qualifications and previous trade experience of teachers. This point was made by one key personnel: “VETiS subjects cannot be offered unless staff are qualified, experienced and willing to teach the subject” (Kassie, KI9, 14/11/2012). Teachers noted that the majority of VETiS teachers at CSS3 had been employed in the VET industry area prior to becoming teachers (Tally, Tia, Tony, FG3, 14/11/2012). They also said that their enthusiasm for the subject area and industry knowledge encouraged student interest. The previous experience and confidence of VETiS teachers expanded the project work in VETiS subjects. Other non-VETiS teachers had the opportunity of witnessing the type of projects the students were undertaking and the skills the students were learning. This increased the understanding and support by non-VETiS teachers for
VETiS subjects. This created a culture of commitment to VETiS by the majority of staff at CSS3.

The fifth influence that enabled VETiS at CSS3 was the Catholic nature of the school and its educational philosophy, which was reflected in the culture of the school. One teacher explained:

VETiS is more than just a certificate. In our Catholic schools we talk about developing the whole person. This is the subject area that lives and breathes the values of Catholic education. We look at citizenship. We look at stewardship. We look at caring for others. We look at appreciating diversity. It has the lot. Hands down, this is our Catholic ethos! (Terry, TFG3, 14/11/2012)

The ethos of a Catholic school was a characterised by its promotion of VETiS, because this demonstrated a philosophy of inclusion, stewardship, pastoral care and concern for developing students’ skills for successful transition to post-school life (Tony, TFG3, 14/11/2012).

6.6.3 Barriers to the implementation of VETiS

Barriers to VETiS implementation at CSS3 were the negative attitude by some non-VETiS staff, limited support for VETiS coordination by leadership, lack of staff qualifications and unwillingness to teach VETiS.

A negative attitude towards VETiS by non-VETiS teachers was a barrier to implementation. Some non-VETiS teachers lacked understanding about the subject area. They criticised student class absence because of the mandatory work placement requirements (Tony, TFG3, 14/11/2012). One teacher commented:

Some staff do not understand the positive aspects of VETiS, especially for students who do not aspire to university. Some of those who structure the curriculum believe that VETiS subject implementation takes away from traditional subjects which are seen as more rigorous. In their eyes the more VETiS we offer, the less rigorous and more dumbed down the curriculum is. (Tally, TFG3, 14/11/2012)

A second barrier concerned the absence of support for VETiS coordination by leadership. At CSS3 the VETiS coordination role was an additional responsibility for
the TAS coordinator. The role was not highly sought after in the school as it was perceived that, "...VETiS coordination is a role for dummies who are silly and get tricked into it. It is a lot of work and gets no recognition as a coordinator or capacity to improve future career prospects" (Tia, TFG3, 14/11/2012). One teacher further emphasised that:

VETiS needs a designated coordinator who is passionate about the subject area. We still have TAS looking after VETiS because most of the subjects are in the technical area (but not all). The current coordinator says that VETiS coordination is twice the amount of work as TAS. (Tally, TFG3, 14/11/2012)

A third barrier related to implementation of VETiS was the lack of qualifications and willingness to teach VETiS in the existing staff body. One teacher commented that: "...some VETiS subjects have been dropped off the timetable because teachers don't want to teach them. This is due to the extra workload involved compared to non-VETiS subjects" (Tally, TFG3, 14/11/2012). Another key staff member said:

The only VETiS subjects implemented are those taught by qualified staff. If there are no qualified teachers in the school then we can't offer the subject. If a teacher comes to the school and has VETiS qualifications we can then consider offering it if they are willing to teach it. (Kate, KI8, 14/11/2012)

6.6.4 Summary Specific Research Question 3

Table 6-12 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS3 Specific Research Question 3 which asked, how do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?
Table 6-12

CSS3 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision makers</td>
<td>• Large team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal and executive team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision process</td>
<td>• Reputation of school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff Qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gender balance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Competition for enrolments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting the needs of most students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling factors</td>
<td>• Availability of VETiS on every timetable line, encourage multiple VETiS course selections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Passionate principal with VETiS experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reputation of VETiS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Qualified and enthusiastic teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fits with a Catholic ethos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>• Negative attitude by some non-VETiS teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of pecuniary reward for VETiS coordination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of willingness to take on VETiS teaching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.7 Conclusion CSS3

Participants at CSS3 attributed the higher than average participation and uptake in VETiS to the long-term commitment to this subject area by leadership. Commitment was evidenced in promotion of a school reputation inclusive of VETiS and school processes such as offering an enabling timetable and equitable subject marketing strategies.

School leadership acknowledged that the reputation of a school attracts student enrolments. To remain viable, leadership must consider the school as a business and recognise that enrolments are vital for continued operation. CSS3 leadership promoted a reputation that the school was suitable for all students and that it provided a balanced curriculum. Balance was a major influence at CSS3 in subject implementation decisions; this included both academic and gender balance.
School leadership at CSS3 promoted VETiS as an equal subject area with parity in all aspects. A designated VETiS coordinator was responsible for the delivery and compliance requirements for all VETiS subjects under the supervision of the TAS coordinator. However, in contrast with other KLA coordination roles, this position did not attract a pecuniary allowance and it was not a stand-alone KLA. This was seen as a barrier for staff who may be interested in undertaking this role. In this respect, VETiS was not an equal subject area to other KLAs at CSS3.

An enabler for VETiS implementation and uptake at CSS3 was the decision of leadership to provide a supportive timetable. The timetable at CSS3 offered VETiS on multiple lines. This allowed students greater flexibility in choosing VETiS by having more than one opportunity to choose the subject against other courses of preference. An example of this was where hospitality was offered on two lines; on one line it may be in competition with biology and on the other it may be in competition with geography. If the student is very interested in both hospitality and biology they then can choose both. School leadership at CSS3 offered VETiS on every timetable line, and students had benefited from this by being able to choose as many VETiS subjects as they wished. In this way CSS3 acknowledged that not all students were intending a university pathway and may not have desired an ATAR score.

The HSC restrictions of one VETiS course contributing to an ATAR still remained a barrier for some students. Students seeking an ATAR score at CSS3 usually only choose one VETiS subject; however, there were students who had chosen two subjects and were still eligible for an ATAR. In this case the VETiS subject with the higher score was included in their ATAR.

Subject selection was influenced by the school strategies for subject information dissemination in Stage 6. Students tended to choose VETiS at CSS3 due to genuine interest and post-school employment benefits. Teachers indicated that some of the more academically capable students chose VETiS because the learning strategies were different to the more theory-based learning which occurs in traditional subject areas.
School leadership at CSS3 believed that all subjects should have an equal status. VETiS was supported in this through equal representation in school subject information dissemination strategies such as subject seminars, information nights and the celebration of achievements of VETiS students. VETiS subjects were visible in the school through the pride demonstrated by students when wearing their industry uniforms and showcasing their skills at school functions and in permanent school structures to which they may have contributed, such as the construction of pathways in the school grounds.

Subject information nights included independent presentations by the Board of Studies Liaison Officer (BOSLO). In these presentations the BOSLO provided actual examples of how all courses including VETiS contributed towards the HSC and the ATAR. This presentation helped to dispel the myth that VETiS did not perform well in an ATAR score and aided in supporting an equal status for this subject area at CSS3. The career adviser also presented at information evenings. When presenting information about VETiS, the career adviser jointly presented with the VETiS coordinator. This team work further demonstrated the value the career adviser placed on this subject area and ensured the information was presented and accurately reflected the benefits of VETiS.

Positive advice for studying VETiS at CSS3 related to the benefits of VETiS for future employment opportunities, the practical skills gained, its usefulness and the potential benefits to the ATAR score. Interestingly, negative advice related to the subject not being useful and that it would not benefit the ATAR. This may indicate that there were still some within the school community who believed that VETiS reflected negatively in an ATAR score.

Parents were primary advisers in relation to subject choices. Parents tended to give advice motivated by the post-school career directions they hoped their children would follow. Stakeholders at CSS3 believed that many parents were attracted to the prestige of careers which resulted from university education. This preference may have reflected negatively in advice associated with VETiS subjects given by parents.

Subject implementation decisions demonstrated a shared leadership approach which included seven school leadership personnel. The principal was part of this team and
had previous VETiS teaching experience. Parents were identified as key stakeholders in subject implementation as they had certain expectations about which subjects should be delivered.

Qualifications and enthusiasm of teachers were both an enabler and barrier to VETiS implementation. If there were no teachers within the school with the required qualifications, VETiS could not be delivered. VETiS training could be provided to teachers with the appropriate prior experience. However this was reliant on the willingness of teachers to commit to this training and the extra workload involved in VETiS delivery.

The data collected at CSS3 provided insights into influences, enablers and barriers relating to the implementation and uptake of VETiS at this school. The experiences of CSS1, CSS2 and CSS3 were reflected upon when conducting research at CSS4. While the main interview questions remained the same at each school, probe questions were employed to further understand poignant influences. It was important to this research to identify similarities and differences among schools to explain the variations between schools in the uptake and implementation of VETiS.
CHAPTER 7: Findings—Case Site School 4

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from Case Site School 4 (CSS4). The first section describes the school, participation in VETiS and the leadership history of the school (Section 7.2). The following sections present the research analysis and data coding which initially stemmed from influences identified in the conceptual framework synthesised in Chapter 2. Codes generated from the literature review (see Table 3-4, Table 3-5, Table 3-6) were linked to specific questions which identified themes to explain influences which affected the implementation and uptake of VETiS (Sections 7.4.4, 7.5.4, 7.6.4).

- Section 7.4 discusses specific Research Question 1: What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?
- Section 7.5 discusses specific Research Question 2: What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
- Section 7.6 discusses specific Research Question 3: How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?

7.2 CSS4 context

CSS4 is located in rural NSW and is a regional comprehensive co-educational Catholic secondary school with an enrolment of between 750-850 students. At the time of this study this school had an above average Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA), according to ACARA’s (n.d.) My School website. The school had a lower than average socio-economic status for non-government NSW schools (Department of Education and Training, 2018). SES is a measure of a school community’s economic and social position in relation to other schools. Although these are 2018 data, they are indicative of the profile of the school at the time of the study in 2012. Table 7-1 summarises the profile of CSS4.
Table 7-1

**CSS4 school profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School sector</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School type</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year range</td>
<td>7-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)</td>
<td>1020-1030 (average ICSEA 1000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous students</td>
<td>1-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language background Other than English</td>
<td>0-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic Status (SES)</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Average for NSW non-government schools is 107)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: (ACARA n.d., 2013; Department of Education and Training, 2018)*

CSS4 experienced declining VETiS enrolment, ranging from 42% in 2005 to 12% in 2013 (Table 7-2). Participation in VETiS peaked in 2008 when 52% of all students in Stage 6 participated in three VETiS subjects. In 2013, 12% of all students in Stage 6 enrolled in the three VETiS subjects.

In 2013, CSS4 offered three different VETiS courses. Student participation represented 12% of all Stage 6 enrolments (NSW Board of Studies, 2013). This participation rate is lower than both state (32%) and Catholic school (34%) participation rates for that year (Catholic Schools NSW, 2019; NSW Board of Studies, 2013).
Table 7-2

**CSS4 implementation and participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Year 11</th>
<th>Year 12</th>
<th>All Stage 6</th>
<th>Year 12 No. VETiS courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the nine-year period shown in Table 7-2, CSS4 experienced two changes in leadership but no changes in VETiS coordination or career adviser. The school leaving age increased to 17 in 2010 and CSS4 experienced increased overall enrolment numbers. Staff believed that these changes in principal and increase in overall enrolment may have influenced the changes identified above. One teacher said that “the most recent principal had a big push for kids to go to university, he used to quote data at the Year 11 information night about the chances of coming out of university with a six-figure income compared to not going” *(Tian, TFG4, 5/12/2012).*

The VETiS coordinator was responsible for representing VETiS interests to leadership, as well as promoting VETiS interests within the school and also supporting VETiS staff with compliance issues. The VETiS coordination duties were integrated with the career advisory role. This combined role attracted time release of 0.4 without a coordination pecuniary allowance, which was a practice inconsistent with payment allocation to other KLA coordination roles.

Because CSS4 experienced a decline in VETiS enrolments and number of subjects offered between 2005 and 2013, it was of interest to explore if changes in leadership during this time affected this decline. Confounding analysis was the increase in overall school enrolment due to the compulsory school leaving age being raised to
17. School staff speculated that this may have shown a lower percentage of Stage 6 VETiS enrolments when actual enrolments in VETiS may not have changed \textit{(Tian, TFG4, 5/12/2012)}. However, other staff believed that students who previously would have left prior to the age of 17 were more likely to be students who were not interested in academic education, and more likely to fit within the VETiS student stereotype \textit{(Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012)}. The reasons for this conundrum invite further exploration.

Data collection at CSS4 involved document analysis, student and parent surveys, focus groups with VETiS teachers and semi-structured interviews with school personnel. Table 7-3 shows the codes used related to each data collection strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant group</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Student survey</td>
<td>Tony, Theo, Tian, Tori, Tenille, Tamara, Trina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parent survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS Teachers</td>
<td>TFG</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Key Personnel (principal, curriculum coordinator, career adviser, VETiS coordinator)</td>
<td>KI</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document</td>
<td>Document</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3 Analysis

The research analysis and data coding initially stemmed from influences identified in the conceptual framework synthesised in Chapter 2. Other codes were developed inductively by an iterative process involving pattern identification. Codes were linked to specific questions which identified themes to explain behaviours and considerations at this school in relation to the implementation and uptake of VETiS in CSS4. A synopsis of findings is presented in Sections 7.4.4, 7.5.4 and 7.6.4 which outline the codes and emergent themes found in the data.
7.4 CSS4 Specific Research Question 1

Data revealed three themes emerging in response to the first Specific Research Question, *what influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?* These themes are presented in Table 7-4 and are further discussed in this section.

Table 7-4

*CSS4 understandings, Specific Research Question 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Understandings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.4.1 Information to students and parent advice</td>
<td>• School processes for disseminating subject information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How VETiS programs address parent expectation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.2 Reasons for subject selection</td>
<td>• Differing reasons different subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social aspects of schooling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Differences in understandings of teachers/leadership and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School demographics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.3 Enablers and barriers for VETiS subject choice</td>
<td>• VETiS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SBAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• TVET</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.4.1 Information to students and parental influence

Two aspects influence student and parental decisions concerning VETiS subject choice. They are:

- how information concerning VETiS is disseminated to students; and
- how VETiS programs address parent expectations.
7.4.1.1 School processes for disseminating HSC subject selection information

CSS4’s Year 10 to 11 subject information practices offered students, and parents, information about the Higher School Certificate, ATAR and subject selection. School leadership personnel decided how these practices were conducted, by whom and the comprehensiveness of information for each subject area.

CSS4 conducted an information night and issued a subject information booklet. The curriculum coordinator spoke with students during home group periods. A compulsory interview day was held with students with parents in attendance and a school representative, who was either a KLA coordinator or a member of the school leadership team. A subject market was also held by KLA coordinators who presented their subject areas.

There was consensus among staff that VETiS was not visible enough or marketed well at CSS4. It was speculated that the prior popularity of VETiS subjects may have resulted in a complacent attitude from VETiS staff towards subject promotion. Moreover, one teacher commented that staff had “rested on their laurels because VETiS had a natural drawcard, which was the certificate gained. Teachers have not been proactive when promoting and marketing VETiS subjects, whereas teachers from other subject areas have been” (Tian, TFG4, 5/12/2012).

7.4.1.2 How VETiS programs meet parent expectation

Parent expectation influenced the advice they gave regarding subject choice. The prevailing view among staff was that the advice which parents gave may have been based on their own experiences. Some parents had specific pathways in mind for their child, which influenced the advice given. For example, one key staff member said:
Parents are often informed by the media education and what a successful education looks like. Many parents develop the view that their child will be more successful later in life if they have a university degree. Parents are influential in subject decisions. The type of relationship the student has with their parent determines how much influence they have. Some parents bully their child, often this bullying is based on their desire for their child to follow a specific career or educational pathway. Parents are not always realistic about the academic ability of their child or consider their child's career interests. (Kaley, KI13, 5/12/2012)

Staff believed that parents may want a different or ‘better’ job for their child than they experienced. For example, “If the parent is a fitter, they don’t want their child to be a fitter—they want better for their kids. More parents are aspiring towards a career that leads from a university education for their child, this is often out of whack with their academic ability” (Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012).

Parental expectations for their child’s post-school career influenced subject advice, according to those interviewed. One key staff member commented that “the perception by parents is that the learning at university is not practical. Therefore, their child would be better off doing theory-based subjects in preparation for university than VETiS subjects” (Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012).

The motivation behind parent choice of a non-government school may have influenced their expectation for the education gained, and expected career pathways for their child. Staff were concerned that parents expected value for money from a non-government school education, with one teacher saying “no-one pays $20 000 for their kid to be a tradie” (Tori, TFG4, 5/12/2012).

7.4.2 Reasons for subject choices

In phase 1 of the research process, a student survey (N=94) was conducted at CSS4 where students indicated their subject choices and ranked how influential each of the listed reasons were for each subject chosen. The list of reasons was developed from interviews and surveys with teachers, parents and students in the pilot phase of this research. The ranking used a Likert scale ranging from extremely important (4) to not important (0). Table 7-5 shows median scores of students’ reasons for subject choice at CSS4.
Table 7-5

CSS4 median responses for subject choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Selection Influence</th>
<th>VET Construction</th>
<th>VET Entertainment</th>
<th>VET Hospitality</th>
<th>VET Metals &amp; Engineering (M&amp;E)</th>
<th>School Based Apprenticeship/Traineeship (SBAT)</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Religious Education</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Sciences</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Community &amp; Family Studies (C Afro)</th>
<th>Personal Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)</th>
<th>Content Endorsed Course</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Creative Arts</th>
<th>Ethics</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>All VETiS</th>
<th>All non-VETiS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Genuinely interested in this subject</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - I am good at this subject</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - This subject is good for my ATAR</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - This subject is a pre-requisite for future study</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - This subject is useful for career intent</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - This subject will give me skills for my personal life</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - This subject looks good on my HSC</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - This subject is good for my resume</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - My friends are in this class</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - I like the teacher</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - It was the only subject on the line that was suitable to me</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 - This subject was easier than other subjects on this line</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - This subject might help me get a job</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - Done this subject before and enjoyed it</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - Subject has a reputation for achieving high results in the HSC exam</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-5 shows that subject choice was influenced by all of the fifteen reasons in each subject to varying degrees. Different reasons were likely to influence VETiS subject choice compared to non-VETiS subjects. Figure 7-1 diagrammatically presents the influences more likely or less likely to affect the choice of VETiS than non-VETiS subjects at CSS2. A ranking of 3.0 or above (important/very important) was deemed a major reason. Rankings of less than 1.6 had little influence over subject choices.
The major reasons more likely to influence choice of VETiS than non-VETiS subjects at CSS4 were:

- 1—Genuine interest (VETiS 3.71/non-VETiS 3.20).
- 2—Being good at this subject (VETiS 3.52/non-VETiS 2.99).
- 5—Useful for future career (VETiS 3.33/non-VETiS 2.87).
- 6—Skills for personal life (VETiS 3.36/non-VETiS 3.04).
- 7—Subject is good for resume (VETiS 3.06/non-VETiS 2.79).
- 13—Might help to get a job (VETiS 3.27/non-VETiS 2.79).

The reasons less likely to influence VETiS than non-VETiS subject choice at CSS4 were:

- 11—only subject on that line that was suitable to me (VETiS 1.56/non-VETiS 1.89).
- 12—easier than other subjects on that line (VETiS 1.57/non-VETiS 1.89).
Teachers and leadership expressed different opinions compared to students about the reasons for VETiS subject choices. Staff believed the reason students chose VETiS was because they perceived it as being easier than other subjects. One key staff member commented that “there is a stereotype about VETiS subjects, that if you can't do anything else, at least you can do a VETiS subject. They're not academic. Why waste their time?” (Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012). Students denied that this perspective was accurate (Figure 7-1).

School staff believed that students chose subjects to be with their friends or to be in classes where the other students had similar academic abilities. Students who saw themselves as academic were less likely to choose subjects that had a reputation for being suitable to students with a lower academic ability. For example, one staff member said:

Student relationships are very important, they want to be in class with ‘peers’ and won’t choose subjects that ‘like’ students aren’t in. Academic students do not want to be in a class that has the reputation of being suited to students who do not succeed academically. (Kaley, 5/12/2012)

Students, however, did not place a high importance on being with their friends when making subject choices (Figure 7-1).

School staff said the popularity of the teacher was a major reason for subject choice, and that “a charismatic and popular teacher will attract kids to their subject” (Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012). Yet again, this was denied by students as being a major influence (Figure 7-1).

The differences in perspectives among students, teachers and leadership regarding the reasons for VETiS subject choice are interesting to this research as the perceptions of the teachers about student subject choices reasons may influence advice given to certain students.

7.4.3 Enablers and barriers for VETiS subject choice

In the next two sections enablers and barriers for VETiS subject selection are discussed. These are shown in Table 7-6.
### Table 7-6

**CSS4 enablers/barriers for VETiS subject selection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enablers that could encourage students to choose VETiS</th>
<th>Barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Charismatic or popular teacher.</td>
<td>1. Poor status of VETiS subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Visibility within school.</td>
<td>2. Social considerations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Local employment opportunities.</td>
<td>3. Teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students advised to do VETiS over other subjects due to academic history.</td>
<td>4. ATAR considerations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Range of TVET opportunities.</td>
<td>5. Work placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Marketing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Lack of SBAT opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Lack of flexibility on timetable to support SBAT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Subject selection methods TVET.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Absences from school subjects due to TVET.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Disconnection between school and TAFE staff TVET.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 7.4.3.1 Enablers that could encourage students to choose VETiS

Six enablers were identified that supported students to choose VETiS. The first enabler was teacher popularity at CSS4. It was believed that teachers who were charismatic, passionate and enthusiastic about the subject tended to attract students to their courses. One key staff member said that “a previous teacher attracted kids to his classes because he was so charismatic, when he left the numbers went down” (*Keeta, KL15, 5/12/2012*). Student survey response confirmed this enabler, noting that the teacher was a reason for subject choice (figure 7-1).

A second enabler concerned recognition from school leadership through visibility of the products of VETiS projects and the activities of VETiS students. Projects were
negotiated with school leadership which allowed opportunities for students to develop their skills and achieve their competencies. The projects aimed to benefit the school community and included building seats, outdoor shelters and concreting pathways. School leadership acknowledged the work done by placing plaques on permanent fixtures created by students. The hospitality students regularly showcased their skills at school functions, and were publicly thanked for their work. The ‘visibility’ of the practical projects and worthwhile skills being developed, together with the value leadership placed on the work done by the students, was seen to encourage future student participation (Tori, TFG4, 5/12/2012).

Local industry needs were a third enabler for VETiS selection. VETiS students participated in mandatory work placement for one week each year. During this time VETiS teachers visited each placement and spoke with employers about industry needs. One teacher went on to say, “We are helping address employer needs for recruitment of staff and also helping kids get a career start” (Tori, TFG4, 5/12/2012). Industry visits by teachers and work placement experiences had also assisted students to gain employment as apprentices or trainees.

A fourth enabler was the behaviour of teachers of non-VETiS subjects who were reported to have encouraged certain students away from their subjects and into VETiS subjects, which subsequently increased VETiS enrolments. One VETiS teacher stated, “VETiS is seen to get the dregs of students at times. They are steered into it, no-one wants them. So it is the logical receptacle” (Keeta, KI5, 5/12/2012). Consequently, VETiS participation increased due to certain students being steered into VETiS. However, the reasons behind this ‘steering’ were not necessarily related to student interest or benefit.

A fifth enabler was the availability of a broad range of courses offered through TVET which had a positive influence on TVET enrolment. Vocational courses that were not offered internally expanded VET choices and meet career interests. Extended choices also enabled students to choose VETiS subjects which were offered within the school but clashed with other subjects of interest on the timetable (Tian, TFG4, 5/12/2012).
A sixth enabler to TVET participation was the support from the school to access TVET. Transportation was arranged for students to enable them to attend the TVET subjects at TAFE, due to the long distance between the school and TAFE (Kaz, K14, 5/12/2012).

Six enabling influences supported VETiS subject selection at CSS4, these were identified in interviews with key staff and teachers. They were: the teacher; subject visibility; employment opportunities; advice given to students; TVET opportunities; and school support for TVET attendance.

7.4.3.2 Barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS

Twelve barriers that could discourage students from choosing VETiS are now discussed. The first barrier identified in the data related to subject status. In particular, VETiS had a different status to other subjects and was “not being seen in the same light” (Theo, TFG4, 5/12/2012) at CSS4. Moreover, there was concern that studying VETiS could disadvantage a student when the school leadership celebrated educational success. Concern was raised that a previous student, who had performed higher than any other student in the HSC, could not be awarded dux due to having studied VETiS. One teacher said, “There was something about a student who couldn’t be accepted as dux because they had done one or two VETiS subjects” (Tian, TFG4, 5/12/2012). She also said:

There is still a broad perception that VETiS subjects are associated with non-academic students. Therefore students who study VETiS are viewed as not being as good as students who study academic. It might go back to the link between apprenticeships and VETiS. Apprenticeships became a bit of a dirty word as there was a belief if you want to be successful you have to have a university qualification. There was a time when an apprenticeship was seen as a good thing. Kids were encouraged to get an apprenticeship, get a trade—you will never be out of work. This has changed. Parents want their kids to stay on at school and go to university to get a glamorous job.” (Tian, TFG4, 5/12/2012)

The social aspects of schooling presented a second barrier to VETiS subject selection. The perception of the type of student undertaking VETiS may influence choice of subjects, according to those interviewed. For example one key staff member said:
Students want to be in classes with their peers. If they see themselves as academic they won’t choose a subject that has a reputation for being suitable for less academic students. *(Kaley, KI13, 5/12/2012)*

Lack of teacher popularity was a third barrier to subject selection for VETiS. One key staff member stated that, “students are reactive to teachers. If they don’t like the teacher they will not choose the subject” *(Kaley, KI13, 5/12/2012)*. The teacher was also identified as an enabler if the teacher was well-liked by students.

A fourth barrier was the perception that VETiS subjects do not perform as well as traditional subjects in the ATAR score. Staff believed that the perceived push by society and parents towards academic pathways had a detrimental effect on student engagement and success at school. One teacher explained, “There are students who are struggling in academic subjects. They then have two years of agony when they should have chosen VETiS and would have done really well” *(Theo, TFG4, 5/12/2012)*. Another teacher confirmed this by saying:

> Year 11 and 12 are seen as academic years, even if kids are not particularly academic. I think either they push themselves, or their parents push them, to take subjects seen to be academic. *(Tori, TFG4, 5/12/2012)*

Work placement had a negative influence on subject choice in VETiS, and was a fifth barrier to selection. Many students at CSS4 had part-time jobs. There was an attitude by some students that work placement should be paid. One key staff member stated: “They don't like the work placement, because they're not getting paid. We have a high percentage of kids who work, so they want to get paid for what they do” *(Keeta, KI5, 5/12/2012)*.

A sixth barrier to student VETiS selection related to timetabling; all VETiS subjects were offered on the one line and no double lessons were offered within the school timetable. Some VETiS courses, such as hospitality, required extended lengths of time to complete all aspects of a learning activity, for example preparing, cooking and cleaning up afterwards. This absence of double lessons resulted in teachers extending class times into lunch breaks and after school. One key staff member stated, “Students are forced to come into classes outside of the normal timetable which has a negative effect on interest in the subject” *(Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012)*.
The lack of opportunities for employment as an SBAT was a seventh barrier to selection. The difficulty in securing an SBAT and lack of employer interest resulted in few SBATs being conducted at CSS4. Keeta commented:

There are very few SBATs advertised. They're hard to get. If we had more employers willing and putting themselves up as employers of school-based trainees and apprentices, then we'd have this going more too. *(Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012)*

Insufficient marketing was an eight barrier to subject selection. Key personnel believed that “more could be done to market VETiS” and the reasons for insufficient marketing were due to the “times we are going through, the focus is on academic push at present” *(Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012)*.

The timetable was a ninth barrier to SBAT selection. SBATs require students to be absent for one day a week; staff believed that the way the school timetable is constructed had a negative influence in relation to SBAT subject selection. For example, one key staff member said:

Well, again the timetable prohibits SBATs. The timetable does not allow any flexibility to cater for students being absent one day each week. We could work with these kids and compress the timetable into four days, have a day for them to do their practicals and do their work experience. It would be better for SBATS and VETiS. *(Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012)*

A tenth barrier related to TVET selection and the initial subject choice process. Students indicated a first round preference for subject choice based on school-offered subjects only. They were only able to indicate TVET during the interview or second round preference stage *(Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012)*. A further difficulty was attending TVET information days and submitting TVET applications. “It is made much harder for kids, they have to make their own way up to the TAFE on two occasions, once for the information day and the second for applying” *(Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012)*. She further said that the motivation driving leadership decisions about the amount of support given to TVET enrolment processes was the history of “students dropping out, students now have to demonstrate initiative and interest to attend”.

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An eleventh barrier was absences from other classes due to attendance at TAFE. Incompatibility with the school timetable resulted in TVET students being absent on a regular basis from school-conducted courses. One teacher claimed, “Year 12s who go to TAFE every week miss my classes three out of four times each month, and the kids don’t like that because they have to make up for work missed” (Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012).

A twelfth barrier related to TVET participation was the disconnection between school staff and TAFE staff. Communication and support was identified by one key staff member as the problem, who said:

We’ve had a couple of spectacular failures. Students who haven’t done the work required under TAFE supervision, they just haven’t been up to the work or the job, or may not be as tightly supervised. We then hear about it too late, and have not met the requirements for that subject. The subject was then not eligible to be counted towards the HSC, nor do they get the vocational certificate they expected. You often hear about how TAFE is different, and there are high expectations, but often that's not the case in terms of how much support is given to students to meet expectations and outcomes like we would do in a school.

(Kaz, KI14, 5/12/2012)

Twelve barriers that could discourage VETiS selection were identified at CSS4. They were poor VETiS status, social inclusion, teacher, ATAR, work placement, timetabling, insufficient marketing, lack of opportunity to undertake an SBAT, inflexible timetable with regard to SBATs, TVET subject selection methods, absences related to TVET and a disconnect with TVET delivery.

7.4.4 Summary Specific Research Question 1

Table 7-7 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS4 Specific Research Question 1 which asked, what influences underpin student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| School processes and structure of planned subject information dissemination | • Information day; subject information booklet; compulsory interview with student and parent; subject market day.  
• How VETiS programs address parent expectation. |
| Reasons for subject choice | • Useful for future career intent.  
• Might help get a job.  
• Skills for personal life.  
• Good for resume.  
• Being good at the subject.  
• Genuine interest. |
| Enabling factors influencing subject choice for VETiS | • Charismatic or popular teacher; visibility in the school; employment opportunities; students advised to do VETiS (easier); range of TVET opportunity; support from school for TVET. |
| Factors which create a barrier for VETiS subject choice who, what, why | • VETiS status; type of student/social aspects; teacher; ATAR considerations; work placement; insufficient time allocation; timetable; lack of SBAT opportunities; marketing; subject selection methods for TVET; absences due to TVET; disconnection between school and TAFE; staff TVET. |

7.5 CSS4 Specific Research Question 2

An analysis of the data generated the following issues which structure the presentation of findings for CSS4 Specific Research Question 2, what information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects? Table 7-8 shows the themes and understandings for Specific Research Question 2.
### Key themes

#### 7.5.1 Subject advisory processes

- School practices to guide subject selection and marketing of VETiS.
- Which practices most valued by students.
- Career advice.
- Advice and advisers for and against VETiS.

#### 7.5.2 Advisers

- Influence of key advisers.
- Motivation of advisers.
- Type and extent of advice.

#### 7.5.3 Written information

- Subject information handbook.
- Information about VETiS:
  - Amount of information.
  - Language used.
  - VETiS costs and rules.

### 7.5.1 Subject advisory processes

There were various advisory processes which guided students and their parents in subject choices at CSS4, including both formal and informal processes. Formal processes involved an information day, a compulsory interview between school staff and students with parents accompanying them. Students were also issued with a written subject information handbook. Informal processes involved interviews occurring with the career adviser and personal discussions with teachers.

School processes offered subject advice and information to assist students to make decisions. Students valued individual/personal contact without parents being present more highly other initiatives (Figure 7-2). In particular they identified the following as particularly helpful:

- Individual interviews with school staff without parents present.
• Interviews with the school career adviser (with or without parents being present).
• Information sessions conducted by the career adviser more than other experiences of gaining subject information and advice.

The students identified the following as less helpful:
• Individual interviews with school staff with parents present.
• Group presentations from subject teachers.
• Previous students sharing their experiences.
• Written subject information handbooks.

![Figure 7-2 CSS4 student survey response, student value on subject information processes](image)

Specifically, helpful subject selection advice about whether to study VETiS subjects or not came from teachers, employers, the curriculum coordinator, career adviser or parents, shown in Table 7-9. Twenty-six percent of students surveyed were advised to study VETiS. However, some students who had been advised to study VETiS chose not to. This advice originated from parents, teachers and the career adviser.
Some advice came from VETiS teachers who were promoting their own subject. The advice included:

- VETiS subjects are useful in post-school life.
- VETiS might help to get a job.
- The student will be successful in the subject.
- The subject will reflect positively on the ATAR.
- VETiS subjects are valuable and enjoyable.

Two percent of students were advised not to study VETiS. The reason for this advice concerned the courses being a ‘waste of time’ and that VETiS would not contribute to the ATAR score. This advice came from teachers of non-VETiS subjects.
### CSS4 student survey response subject advice specific to VETiS

#### Subject advice specific to VETiS subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Nature of advice given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students who were advised to study VETiS and did.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>VETiS teachers; employers; career adviser; other subject teacher; parents.</td>
<td>Good for future; will help get a job; being good at the subject; enjoyment; good for ATAR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who were advised to study VETiS and did NOT.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>VETiS teacher; parents; curriculum coordinator.</td>
<td>Enjoyment; skills for work; to promote their class; good for future career intent; valuable subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students advised NOT to study VETiS and did NOT.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher at compulsory interview; other subject teacher.</td>
<td>Waste of time; no ATAR contribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students advised NOT to do a VETiS subject and DID.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7-3 shows each subject area and student acknowledgement of advice provided for each subject chosen. Of interest is that students received less subject advice about VETiS than other subjects.
Parents, teachers and the career adviser were key advisers available to students in the process of subject choice. The type, extent and motivation underpinning the advice varied.

Staff believed that subject advice by parents was an important contribution and influential in the subject decision-making process. The majority (51%) of students surveyed acknowledged parent advice as being influential in the subjects they had chosen. Staff believed that parent advice may be motivated by public perceptions about education and how it related to an individual's post-school success. One key staff member said, “Parents are often informed by media, and have the view that their child will be more successful in life if they have a uni degree” (Kaley, K113, 5/12/2012). Moreover, their advice was influenced by their own experiences, for example “…if the parent is a fitter, they don’t want the same career for their child, so they want better for their kids, which is often out of whack with the kids’ ability level” (Keeta, K15, 1/11//2012).

There was consensus among staff that parents were influential in subject selections at CSS4 and their strategies for giving advice varied depending on their relationship with their child. Some parents were said to bully their child based on their desires for their future career; these desires were not always realistic or in line with the student’s
ability or interest. Other parents had a very open relationship in which they discussed the merits of each subject. And yet other parents were inclined to give into their child regardless of their personal opinion (Kaley, KL13, 5/12/2012). However, not all parents were actively involved in subject decisions. For example, one key staff member commented that, “…many parents at this school are happy to leave the business of education to the school. This is more so in this school than other schools in my experience” (Kaz, KL4, 1/11/2102).

Teachers were also primary advisers for subject choices. Students who were advised by teachers to study VETiS at CSS4 were more likely to be the non-academic students. One key staff member explained, “…VETiS was seen as easier than other subjects, if a student can’t cope with the academic subjects they are advised to do VETiS, it is treated as a last resort” (Keeta, KL15, 5/12/2012).

Teacher advice regarding the likelihood that courses offered would in fact be available the following year influenced subject decisions at CSS4. Leadership had the potential to create a perception that the subjects would not actually run prior to students indicating final subject choices, according to one staff member who said:

Teachers at the interviews were told to say (by leadership) that the course is not likely to run due to insufficient interest, so of course the students didn’t choose it. This was incorrect as initial student preferences indicated that there were 13 students who wanted to do that subject. Which was an interest level higher than other courses which did not receive that advice. (Theo, TFG4, 5/12/2012)

The information given to students about VETiS from non-VETiS teachers was appeared to be, at times, incomplete and in some cases incorrect. For example, one teacher said:

I have spoken with groups of students who had been given misplaced information and did not understand VETiS. They were not aware of the value of VETiS. I told them about the benefits and value to future employment and education pathways. After this students felt that the courses were something they could use, some for future career and some felt the skills could be used in part-time jobs while studying post-school. Teachers of other subject areas are more confident presenting information about traditional subjects. (Tori, TFG4, 5/12/2012)
The career adviser was another source of subject advice for students at CSS4. This was a service that could be provided by the career adviser; one key staff member emphasised that:

…there are various ways that any student in our care can be looked after in terms of subject advice, and that is certainly a careers adviser role but not confined to that role by any means. (Kaz, K114, 5/12/2012)

The career adviser role was combined with the responsibility of VETiS coordination at CSS4. Staff believed that the VETiS coordination role was assigned to the careers role because: “…leadership felt the time allocated to career advice was too generous and the career adviser needed more things to do” (Keeta, K115, 1/22/2012). At the time of appointment the career adviser was unfamiliar with VETiS.

Parents and staff believed that career advice in CSS4 was insufficient because it failed to incorporate the available technology to expand opportunities for students. One key staff member stated:

Compared to other secondary schools, I have been in, our careers service is inadequate and being criticised by parents. The role needs more time allocation and the person needs to have the knowledge to provide information and opportunities about careers to students. We need to use technology more in the careers area. (Kaz, K114, 5/12/2012)

7.5.3 Written information

The subject information handbook included detailed information concerning each VETiS subject. It was presented using a school-designed template, rather than a BOS template, and included the scope of learning outcomes and sequence for delivery. The researcher found that the language used in written VETiS information was clear and factual and met compliance requirements for accredited courses, according to VET standards.

The handbook stated the University Admission Centre (UAC) rule of limiting one VETiS subject for inclusion in the ATAR. The handbook also outlined costs concerning uniforms and excursions. The handbook offered detailed information on both TVET and SBAT opportunities.
Staff questioned the value of the subject information booklet, however, with one teacher lamenting “the handbook is probably just a waste of paper because the kids never seem to read it” (Theo, TFG4, 5/12/2012).

7.5.4 Summary Specific Research Question 2

Table 7-10 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS4 Specific Research Question 2 which asked, what information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?

Table 7-10

CSS4 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisory processes</td>
<td>• Information day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Compulsory interview between school staff and students with parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Written handbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Career adviser interview upon request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal discussions with teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of advice</td>
<td>• VETiS teachers; employers; career adviser; non-VETiS teacher; parents; curriculum coordinator; because:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Good for future; ATAR; will do well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Waste of time; no ATAR contribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written information</td>
<td>• Subject information handbook:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o School-designed template.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Clear and factual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o UAC rule of one VETiS for ATAR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Detailed information about TVET and SBAT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Cost information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.6 CSS4 Specific Research Question 3

An analysis of the data generated the following issues which structure the presentation of findings for CSS4, Specific Research Question 3, how do educational
leaders implement VETiS programs in schools? Table 7-11 shows the foci used by the researcher to analyse Specific Research Question 3.

Table 7-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.6.1 Subject implementation processes</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.2 Enabling influences for the implementation of VETiS</td>
<td>Enabler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.3 Barriers to the implementation of VETiS</td>
<td>Barrier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.6.1 Subject implementation processes

Subject implementation decisions at CSS4 were made by the principal and the curriculum coordinator. The influences that motivated decisions on subject implementation included staff qualifications, facilities and student interest (Figure 7-4).

![CSS4 Subject Implementation Influence](image)

Figure 7-4 CSS4 subject implementation influences

Consequently, subject implementation decision-making at CSS4 involved four considerations: staff qualifications, facilities/resources, student interest and KLA coordinator push. The first consideration concerned the qualifications of staff. One
key staff member said that “staffing is considered in subject implementation, including what qualifications and suitability the current teachers have for different subjects” (Kaley, KI13, 5/12/2012).

The availability of physical resources and facilities was the second consideration in subject implementation; one key staff member noted that “the demand on facilities by all subjects is considered when deciding on subjects because we have to allocate rooms and resources” (Kaley, KI13, 5/12/2012).

The third consideration was student interest in the subject. Interest was identified by student selection and subsequent enrolment. School leadership considered the number of students who indicated interest through initial subject selection preferences. Subjects with the highest number of enrolments were more likely to be conducted. One key staff member explained, “if only a few students are interested in a subject, it is not financially feasible to run it” (Kaz, KI14, 5/12/2012).

The fourth consideration was the quality and enthusiasm of contributions to subject discussions by KLA coordinators. The KLA coordinators were given the opportunity to recommend subjects to be offered. One key staff member explained, “Leadership ask the KLA coordinators which subjects to offer, the coordinator considers staff qualifications and interest when providing any recommendations”. (Keeta, KI5, 5/12/2012).

7.6.2 Enabling influences for the implementation of VETiS

Three influences enabled VETiS implementation at CSS4; these are now discussed. The first enabling consideration was support from the diocese. One key staff member explained: “VETiS is strongly supported from the diocese through provision of Registered Training Organisation (RTO) scope, as well as supporting VETiS retraining and management” (Kaz, KI14, 5/12/2012). All VETiS subjects were conducted under the registration of the RTO, and no subject could be implemented unless it was listed on the scope of registration.

Availability of training was a second enabling influence on the implementation of VETiS. Kaz also stated that: “We had the facilities and an enthusiastic teacher with
the right background. Through the diocese we were able to get that person trained and now we can offer that subject” (Kaz, KI14, 5/12/2012).

The third enabling influence on VETiS implementation was student career intent. For example, one teacher said: “We have students who are interested, and wish to pursue a career in the VETiS area. There are jobs available locally in this trade area. These are the courses that should be offered” (Theo, TFG4, 5/12/2012).

Three influences enabled VETiS implementation at CSS4. They were support from the diocese RTO, teacher training provision and student career intent.

7.6.3 Barriers to the implementation of VETiS

There were seven barriers identified which were related to the implementation of VETiS; these are now discussed.

The first barrier concerns the history of subjects delivered in the school. One key staff member explained that: “School leadership have a comfort zone with current practice. They don’t want to or may feel that there is no need to change” (Kaley, KI13, 5/12/2012).

The perceived retention potential of the type of student who chose VETiS was a second barrier to implementation. When subject enrolments declined from Year 11 to Year 12, there was a risk that the Year 12 class was then too expensive to run. One key staff member explained:

The minimum number of students needed to choose a VETiS subject is strictly monitored. Statistics show that some students drop out before the end of Year 12, and the students who are likely to leave are the students who choose VETiS. (Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012)

The third barrier to VETiS implementation at CSS4 was the lack of timetable opportunities for selection of VETiS subjects. The choice of subjects was limited to a set of subjects on each timetable line. In one year all VETiS subjects were offered on the same line. This limited VETiS selection to one timetable line only and students to a limit of one VETiS subject. One key staff member emphasised that in order to increase VETiS participation:
We need one practical or VETiS subject on each timetable line so that students have a real choice. Especially as now we have more non-academic or practical students staying in school till 17. We are losing students before Year 12 because they are not able to study VETiS. All VETiS subjects were offered on one line. Consequently the numbers in each VETiS class are lower as the students are spread across them. The VETiS courses that run are the ones with the higher number of enrolments. The students who are interested in the VETiS course with fewer numbers are then channelled into the one with higher numbers, or they end up selecting a non-VETiS subject. Therefore, some VETiS classes won’t run because students can only choose one, even when they would like to do more. This results in fewer VETiS subjects conducted and students being forced into theory-based subjects. Students are not happy with the choices available and feel like they are wasting their time and leave the school. This is a way for school leadership to control which subjects which are conducted at the school. *(Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012)*

A fourth barrier to implementation at CSS4 was negativity from some non-VETiS teachers. One teacher explained:

There is still a broad perception that VETiS subjects are associated with non-academic people. VETiS subjects are thought to be not as good as traditional subjects by teachers entrenched in academic subjects. You hear some (not all) non-VETiS teachers say: ‘it is only VETiS and kids are always away on their stupid work placement’. *(Tian, TFG4, 5/12/2012)*

A fifth barrier was competition between subjects and the influence of different KLA areas on the timetable. One key staff member stated that:

It would be great if all coordinators were able to have input into the construction of the timetable. The timetable has been offered with only one subject on one line in the past, this was so that students had to choose that subject, and it was not a VETiS subject. The other extreme is all VETiS subjects are offered on one line, so students can only choose one. Therefore, VETiS collapsed from three to two subjects due to the need to spread the students between the VETiS subjects. We felt like there was a bit of subterfuge by doing this and we ended up losing VETiS students and a VETiS subject. *(Keeta, KI15, 5/12/2012)*

A sixth barrier to implementation was the lack of inclusion of KLA coordinators in subject implementation decisions and timetabling. One teacher said:
There has been a lot of controversy over the last couple of years, in that the process wasn’t particularly transparent or equitable, subject coordinators need to be included in decisions about how the lines are set so the majority of kids can be kept happy. (Tian, TFG4, 5/12/2012)

There were six barriers identified which were related to the implementation of VETiS at CSS4. They were: a comfort zone with traditional subjects, risk of VETiS students leaving before Year 12, timetable, negative attitude of non-VETiS staff, competition between faculties, and lack of coordinator involvement in subject implementation decisions.

7.6.4 Summary Specific Research Question 3

Table 7-12 summarises the codes and emergent themes for CSS4 Specific Research Question 3, *how do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?*

Table 7-12

**CSS4 codes and emergent themes, Specific Research Question 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision makers</td>
<td>• Team of two: principal and curriculum coordinator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• KLA coordinator stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision process</td>
<td>• Staff qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Facilities and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• KLA coordinator push.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling factors</td>
<td>• Diocese RTO and support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• VETiS teacher training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student career aspirations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>• Comfort zone with traditional subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Risk of VETiS type of student to leave before Year 12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Timetable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negative attitude non-VETiS staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Competition between faculties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of coordinator involvement in subject implementation decisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.7 Conclusion CSS4

CSS4 evidenced a decline in VETiS participation and uptake. Staff indicated that potential reason was the change in school leadership. The school experienced two changes in principals in a nine-year period. These changes may have reflected the educational directions and philosophies of those who led the school. VETiS coordination was added to the role of the career adviser; however, this was perceived as an opportunity to incorporate more duties into the hours allocated for careers rather than an opportunity to recruit an experienced person to focus on VETiS implementation.

School processes for students selecting subjects involved all subject areas having the opportunity to present at an information night. However, teachers believed more could be done to promote VETiS to students. A concern was voiced that there was a degree of apathy when promoting VETiS at CSS4 as the natural drawcard of the qualification involved was assumed to be enough to attract students. In contrast, other subject areas were actively marketing and recruiting students more assertively.

The timetable was seen as a way of leadership enabling (or hindering) VETiS participation and implementation. The timetable restricted all subjects to single lessons, which was a barrier to students as many VETiS learning activities and assessments require extended time. Students were then required to attend VETiS classes outside of scheduled class times; this did not appeal to some students. Another restriction involved all VETiS subjects being offered on only one timetable line; this restricted participation in multiple VETiS subjects.

Staff at CSS4 felt that VETiS was seen to be of a lower status than other subject areas due to a perception that these subjects were suited to students with a lower academic ability. Staff believed that students at CSS4 chose subjects to be among peers. Students with a higher academic ability did not choose VETiS because they did not want to be seen as the stereotypical VETiS student; in CSS4 this meant non-academic.

Subject advice came from a range of sources at CSS4. Staff identified that parents were key advisers for subject selection. Students also acknowledged that parents provided advice about subjects they had chosen. Staff believed that advice from
many parents was motivated by the career expectations parents had for their child. Career expectations of students by parents may have been influenced by the costs involved in sending children to non-government schools. Concerns were raised that parents may not have seen value in expensive school fees if their child then wanted to be a tradesperson. This was identified as a potential barrier to VETiS participation.

Teachers from non-VETiS subject areas advised students who had a history of lower academic performance into VETiS classes. This advice was motivated by a perception that VETiS was easier than other subjects and the student could cope in this type of subject. There was concern that this advice may have been motivated by a preference of the teacher not to have ‘those’ students in their classes. This reinforced a perception at CSS4 that VETiS was more suited to students with a lower academic ability.

Students were advised to do VETiS for the usefulness of the skills developed and qualifications in post-school employment. The subject’s ability for contributing to an ATAR was also a reason for advice given in favour of studying VETiS. Negative advice came from a non-VETiS teacher during the compulsory interview and related to VETiS being a ‘waste of time’ and that VETiS subjects did not make a positive ATAR contribution.

Subject implementation decisions were made by a team of two at CSS4. Neither of these school leaders had previous experience in VETiS. Enablers to implementation of VETiS were staff qualifications, staff enthusiasm, facilities and support from a diocesan RTO. Barriers were a negative attitude towards VETiS by some non-VETiS staff, competition on the timetable, lack of VETiS opportunities, the existence of a school community comfort zone in relation to traditional subject delivery and the lack of subject coordinator involvement in timetable and subject implementation decisions.

The data collected at CSS4 provided insights into issues, enablers and barriers relating to the implementation and uptake of VETiS at this school. The experiences of CSS1, CSS2, CSS3 and CSS4 were reflected upon throughout the data collection and analysis process. It was important to this research to identify similarities and differences among schools to explain the variations between schools in the uptake and implementation of VETiS.
CHAPTER 8: Cross-site case analysis

The previous four chapters explored the perceptions of participants from four case site schools concerning the student and school leadership decisions which influence the offering, participation and implementation of VETiS. The problem that generated this research related to the lack of consistency in the uptake and implementation of VETiS in rural NSW systemic Catholic schools. Although the four schools shared many similarities there were differences evident that influenced the delivery and uptake of VETiS.

This chapter discusses similarities and differences among the case site schools in order to answer the Main Research Question, *what influences student and school leadership decision-making regarding selection and offering of VETiS courses in Catholic secondary schools?*

The data were consistent in establishing that the individuals employed in the leadership roles of principal, VET coordinator and career adviser influenced VETiS implementation and participation rates in each school. Some schools experienced more changes within these roles than others (Table 8-1). Although principal turnover has not been extensively researched, studies have shown that turnover, particularly of school leaders, impacts student performance (Miller, 2013; Willis, 2016) and school organisational climate (Preity, 2015). The overall importance of the role of school leaders in enhancing staff motivation, staff commitment, school identity, and working conditions, is well established (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Leaders are responsible for creating opportunities or imposing boundaries (Bouwmans, Runhaar, Wesselink, & Mulder, 2017).

CSS1 experienced three changes in principal, career adviser and VETiS coordinator between 2005 and 2013; interestingly this school also evidenced the greatest fluctuations in VETiS participation and implementation of the four schools within this study. CSS2 had the same principal leading the school, however had four changes in VETiS coordinator and two changes in career adviser. Notably this school experienced one major positive fluctuation over the same period; however, overall a continual decline in VETiS implementation and participation was observed (Table 8-2). CSS3, which had the highest (and increasing) implementation and participation
rates, had the same principal, three changes in VETiS coordinator and two changes in career adviser (Table 8-1). CSS4 had two different principals and one person undertaking the combined roles of career adviser and VETiS coordinator; interestingly, this school evidenced the greatest decline in implementation and uptake of VETiS in the period from 2005-2013 (Table 8-2). Despite the literature on the largely positive impact of stable leadership, this research suggests that it is not a simple issue of turnover in key leadership roles that is important. The school with the greatest turnover of leaders (CSS1) still had state average participation rates, but by 2013 was offering more VETiS subjects. How individuals in these roles influence the uptake or implementation of VETiS is further explored in Sections 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3.

Table 8-1
Cross-site participation and implementation trends from key staff interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–2013</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VET Coordinator</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–2013</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career Adviser</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–2013</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VETiS participation in each school was evidenced by the proportion of students who in 2013 undertook a VETiS subject in Stage 6 (Table 8-2). CSS3 had the highest participation with 46% of students enrolling in VETiS subjects in 2013. This contrasts with CSS4 which had only 12% of students studying VETiS. In comparison, 32% of all NSW Stage 6 students enrolled in a VETiS subject. Similarly, 34% of all NSW Catholic Stage 6 students enrolled in a VETiS subject.

Interesting to this research are the changes in VETiS participation between 2005 and 2013. Implementation of VETiS was evident in the number of different VETiS subjects conducted at each school. The richness of offerings among the schools differed and one school had limited offerings but was able to implement multiple classes in those subjects. Other schools had more subjects offered but fewer students in each. CSS3 was the only school that experienced growth in both
participation and implementation of VETiS in this period. CSS4 showed the greatest decline in participation (-30%) and implementation (-1 subject). CSS1 maintained a participation rate consistent with state averages and increased the number of VETiS courses implemented. This differed to CSS2 which experienced consistently lower than average participation over the period from 2005 to 2013 and a decline of VETiS courses implemented. Influences which may explain these trends are explored in Sections 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3.

Table 8-2

Cross-site VETiS participation rates from schools online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6 VETiS participation 2013 (%)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State average 32% 2013</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>Below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic average 34% 2013</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>Below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6 VETiS participation 2005 (%)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in VETiS participation 2005-2013 (%)</td>
<td>-25</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation (number of VETiS subjects conducted) 2013</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation (number of VETiS subjects conducted) 2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in implementation 2005–2013</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1 Specific Research Question 1

Analysis of the data identified similarities and differences related to Specific Research Question 1, what influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects? These are now discussed with the intention of exploring more generally the reasons students choose vocational education subjects.

Each school adopted mostly similar subject information dissemination processes (Table 8-3). However, only CSS2 and CSS4 had a compulsory interview between school leadership staff and students with their parents present. Interestingly, these were the two schools with the lowest VETiS participation rates. The value students
placed on each of these processes is discussed in Specific Research Question 2 (Section 8.2).

Table 8-3
Cross-site formal school processes for subject information dissemination from interviews with teachers and key staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject handbook</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information evening</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject marketing day</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-compulsory Interviews</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents were identified as major advisers to students about subject choices; in all schools, both staff and students acknowledged that the advice provided by parents influenced subject selection choices. This confirms the findings of report prepared for the European Union (TNS Opinion and Social. Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011), which identified that 41% of subject advice was provided by parents or a family member. However, staff perceptions about parental expectations, the basis of their advice, and the focus on traditional subjects, appeared to be the same across all schools. There was consensus among school staff that traditional subjects were generally more highly valued by parents than VETiS subjects, and parent expectations included value for money.

Table 8-4
Cross-site student survey reasons more likely to influence VETiS subject choice than choice of other subjects VETiS/non-VETiS (median)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genuine interest</td>
<td>3.68/3.19</td>
<td>3.56/3.24</td>
<td>3.43/3.13</td>
<td>3.71/3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful for career</td>
<td>3.42/2.84</td>
<td>3.43/2.74</td>
<td>3.33/2.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Might help to get a job</td>
<td>3.32/2.71</td>
<td>3.54/2.55</td>
<td>3.47/2.63</td>
<td>3.27/2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for resume</td>
<td>3.23/2.82</td>
<td>3.51/2.65</td>
<td>3.48/2.72</td>
<td>3.06/2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being good at it</td>
<td>3.51/3.06</td>
<td>3.35/3.00</td>
<td>3.29/2.92</td>
<td>3.52/2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills for personal life</td>
<td>3.40/2.78</td>
<td>3.46/2.85</td>
<td>3.36/3.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for ATAR/HSC</td>
<td>3.32/2.71</td>
<td>3.47/2.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of the survey data revealed that the reasons more likely to influence student choice of VETiS than choice of other subjects related to interest, ability and future benefits of VETiS in career transition at all schools. Table 8-4 provides the median response to the reasons more likely to influence student choice of VETiS subjects. These findings confirmed research undertaken by Klatt et al. (2016). Interestingly, the reasons students chose VETiS subjects differed in general to the perceptions of teachers. School staff and teachers believed that students chose VETiS (Table 8-5) because it was believed to be easier than other subjects at CSS1, CSS2 and CSS4, and in order to be with friends at CSS1 and CSS4, whereas students did not identify these reasons. School staff and teachers at CSS1, CSS3 and CSS4 indicated that students chose VETiS subjects because of the teacher. The differences in perception were interesting to this research as staff beliefs about the influence of teachers and peers on subject choices verify findings in the literature review. Research undertaken by Naz et al. (2014) also found that peers were influential in subject choices. Other research has identified that if a student has academically able peers, he or she is less likely to choose VETiS (Speckesser & Hedges, 2017). These differences are worthy of further exploration, as previous research may not be indicative of current student values.
Table 8-5
Cross-site staff perceptions student reasons for VETiS subject choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easier</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATAR</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different to theory-based learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility of VETiS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value of industry skills and the teacher were enablers in each of the Case Site Schools concerning VETiS subject selection (Table 8-6). Leadership at CSS1 and CSS3 promoted a culture that marketed VETiS subjects as suitable to all students. This included students with higher academic ability and students interested in practical learning activities. These schools, especially CSS3, experienced the highest VETiS enrolments. CSS3 was noteworthy as VETiS subjects were offered on every timetable line. The visibility of VETiS was identified by staff at CSS3 as a reason why students chose these subjects. Previous research identified that stakeholders may influence students by making subjects more (or less) visible in subject information processes or emphasising the disadvantages of choosing VETiS (Dalley-Trim et al., 2008). It has also been found that, although a persistent stigma remains regarding VETiS being suited to lower academic performers, students who chose VETiS expressed well-informed positive views regarding VETiS, mostly in relation to employment opportunities (Vlaardingerbroek & Hachem El-Masri, 2008).

Participants at CSS2 and CSS4, which had the lowest VETiS enrolments, perceived that VETiS was easier than other subjects and suited to students who were less likely
to succeed in academic subjects. This confirms previous research which found that in some schools there is a certain stigma in relation to VETiS courses, where it is seen as a 'soft' option and of low status which in turn has an impact on the take-up by students (Dalley-Trim et al., 2008, p. 58). This suggests that there may be some stigma about participating in these subjects which may flow into a culture where students are avoiding being labelled academically weak.

Table 8-6
Cross-site enabling influences VETiS subject choice from interviews with teachers and key staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student interest</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to get employment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic to industry</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable for all</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetable</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different learning preferences</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility of subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier than other subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal status as a subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School culture promotes VETiS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam not compulsory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different to traditional subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student demographic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from non-VETiS teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enabling influences related to external delivery of VETiS varied among schools (Table 8-7). Enabling SBAT selection was supported by leadership at CSS1. Promotion of TVET and proximity to the external provider were enabling influences at CSS1. Participants from CSS4 identified the range of TVET available and the
leadership support in accessing these subjects as enabling TVET delivery. In contrast CSS2 and CSS3 did not identify any enabling influences for either SBAT or TVET participation. This suggests that school staff may perceive that there are more concerns with these subjects than merits.

Table 8-7
Cross-site enabling influences, SBAT and TVET subject choice from interviews with key staff and teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership support of SBATs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of TVET</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity of TVET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of TVET offered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for TVET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barriers discouraging students from selecting VETiS were identified in each school (Table 8-8). Common barriers across all sites related to ATAR considerations and rules related to how many VETiS subjects may be used in an ATAR. Another common barrier involved the absences created when students were participating in the mandatory work placements. These absences created difficulty in other subject areas by requiring students to catch up on work missed and extra work for teachers of those classes in setting additional work for these students. This barrier reinforces the findings of previous research which identified that the negative impact on other subjects through absences caused by VETiS activities was a common disadvantage (Dalley-Trim et al., 2008).

“VETIS stereotype” refers to the fixed but over simplified idea held by the school community about the particular type of student suited to VETiS subjects. Previous research indicated that stakeholders may perceive that VETiS is for a particular type of student, and students may be assigned to a particular curriculum stream through a deficit view of their capabilities or aspirations (Clarke, 2015). In addition, research undertaken by Ryan (2002) noted that streaming of lower academic performing students into VETiS may have a negative effect on the status of these subjects. The stereotype of a VETiS student would appear to be a barrier to enrolment in CSS1, CSS2 and CSS4. At these schools the perceived type of student who studied VETiS
may have discouraged other students from selecting these subjects. This finding is consistent with previous research which found that students often position themselves among their peers and friends when making subject choice decisions (Brooks, 2003). This perspective contrasted with CSS3 which had the highest VETiS enrolments and the type of student suited to VETiS was not seen as a stereotype. Moreover, CSS1 and CSS3 respondents believed that all students can benefit from studying VETiS, and CSS3 supported this belief with anecdotal evidence of students with high academic ability using VETiS positively in their ATAR scores. However, it is acknowledged that the concept of a stereotypical VETiS student was also identified as a barrier to enrolment at CSS1; this school experienced VETiS participation consistent with the state averages.

The teachers would appear to have been a barrier to students selecting VETiS at CSS1, CSS2 and CSS4. The lack of willingness or enthusiasm to teach VETiS due to the extra workload involved was perceived as a deterrent at all schools. This situation reflects poorly on the leadership within the school. Teacher morale and commitment is important, as argued above, in establishing shared values about the merit of VETiS subjects. This finding is consistent with the parliamentary report on the inquiry into VET which identified that a major factor which has the potential to impact adversely on delivery of VETiS was “teacher time required for administration, paperwork and training” (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2004, p. 159). The lack of popularity of the teacher was perceived as a potential barrier to selection at CSS 2 and CSS4 by staff respondents, however students did not acknowledge the teacher as a major reason for VETiS subject choice (Table 8-8).

The timetable would appear to be a barrier at CSS 2 and CSS4; these schools experienced lower than average VETiS participation. Respondents from both schools indicated that the way the timetable was constructed had the potential to limit student VETiS choices. The timetable lines offered VETiS against other subjects which may have been important to students. In contrast, CSS4, which experienced the greatest decline in VETiS participation and implementation, offered all VETiS subjects on one timetable line one year; respondents indicated that this limited VETiS subject choice to only one and that there was also concern that this spread VETiS enrolments across all offerings, forcing one VETiS subject to be removed from
selection. Previous research proposed a timetabling strategy which may be more relevant whereby students are able to choose a course of study from a complete list of subjects rather than being constrained by offerings (Wood & Whitaker, 1998).

CSS4 also identified that the timetable lacked double lessons which required students to extend their learning outside regular class times to complete work and assessment activities. This would appear to be a barrier for some students as they may not be able to stay after school due to transport considerations; others may not be willing to extend school hours due to extra-curricular commitments. This suggests that the way the timetable is structured influences VETiS participation, and that leadership commitment to VETiS can either support or prohibit VETiS selection through timetable structuring.

The status of VETiS would appear to be a barrier at CSS4; this school experienced the greatest decline in participation and implementation between 2005 and 2013. This barrier confirms the findings of research undertaken by Clayton et al. (2010), which identified that a major barrier to successful implementation was the limited status of VETiS in the eyes of some career advisers and school teachers.

Interesting to this research was that respondents from CSS3 identified fewer barriers to VETiS subject selection than other schools in this study. Moreover, CSS3 also experienced growth in VETiS between 2005 and 2013 in both VETiS participation and implementation.
Table 8-8
Cross-site barriers to VETiS subject selection from interview data key staff and teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATAR considerations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATAR restrictions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work placement</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student stereotype</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject marketing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion about VETiS</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS restrictions</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of VETiS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity to traditional subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barriers were identified relating to externally-delivered VETiS (Table 8-9). Barriers for the selection of SBATs were identified by participants at CSS2, CSS3 and CSS4. Participants at CSS2 and CSS3 believed that a poor history of student completion of SBATs influenced the enthusiasm of the school leadership for this type of VETiS subject. CSS2 further identified that absences due to SBAT participation were also a barrier as it affected the students’ capacity for success in other subjects. In contrast, CSS4 participants believed that there was a lack of opportunity in local industry to employ students interested in SBATs. Previous research raised concern about the risk of raising student aspirations without realistic job opportunities being available (Atweh, Taylor, & Singh, 2005). All schools in this study experienced similar industry activities, although more industry employers existed in the towns where CSS2 and
CSS4 were located. This is of interest to this research as processes in all schools required students to find an employer if they wanted to participate in SBAT; this raises the question of whether SBAT take-up may be more successful if better partnerships existed between schools and local industry. However, SBAT participation was consistently low among all schools in this study.

Barriers were identified related to selection of TVET as a VETiS subject in three schools. CSS1, CSS2 and CSS4 had the largest number of students enrolled in TVET. CSS3 participants indicated that the options provided for school-delivered VETiS provided sufficient opportunities, variety and flexibility for students within the school timetable. However, the costs associated with TVET were identified as a barrier in CSS1 and CSS2. Disconnect and lack of communication between TAFE and the school was identified as a barrier in CSS2 and CSS4. Anecdotal reports from these schools identified that previous students’ HSC achievement was compromised by the lack of information from the TAFE regarding attendance and assessment outcomes. CSS3, which had the lowest participation rates in TVET, identified that lack of promotion by the school and lack of opportunity at the local TAFE, were barriers to TVET subject selection. The barriers identified suggest that there are different reasons which prohibit TVET participation among schools. It is a reasonable interpretation that leadership in CSS3 saw VETiS as a preferable option to TVET and felt that there was sufficient capacity to deliver a variety of VETiS subjects of interest to students.
8.1.1 Summary Specific Research Question 1

The findings identified in Specific Research Question 1 provide information which may explain motivations underpinning decision-making concerning VETiS subject choices. Six influences that underpin subject choices were identified as influences that motivated decision-making concerning VETiS subject choices. These are now briefly discussed (Table 8-10), and will be expanded on in Chapter 9.
Table 8-10

*Influences on student decision-making, Specific Research Question 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students as neglected stakeholders</td>
<td>a) School capacity and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student preparation for post-school employment</td>
<td>b) Information dissemination processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent expectation</td>
<td>c) Student interest and perceived relevance of options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School culture</td>
<td>d) Teachers’ roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest and relevance of options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information provided to students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling influences and barriers in subject choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff interviewed at each school identified students as key stakeholders in subject participation and implementation decisions. However, students were only able to choose from a list of subjects provided to them by school leadership.

During the pilot phase of this research, qualitative methods were used to ascertain a defined list of fifteen reasons why students at the three pilot schools chose their particular secondary school subjects. During the research, a large-sample survey was conducted with Year 11 students at each Case Site School to identify which of those reasons were important when selecting their suite of subjects for the HSC. The survey provided quantitative data from each school which compared reasons for choosing VETiS subjects to reasons for choosing non-VETiS subjects (Appendix D).

The survey data found that all fifteen reasons influenced subject selections to greater or lesser degrees in all subjects. Individual students were influenced at greater or lesser degrees by each reason for each subject chosen. An overall summation average of all students who chose each subject in each Case Site School informed these findings.

According to student survey responses, in all Case Site Schools the major reasons for choosing VETiS were genuine interest and being good at the subject (Table 8-4). These reasons were also the primary reasons for students to choose non-VETiS
subjects at each Case Site School (Table 4-5, Table 5-5, Table 6-5 and Table 7-5). However, VETiS subjects were more likely to be chosen at all Case Site Schools for their potential to be beneficial in post-school employment opportunities than non-VETiS subjects were. Interestingly, students from CSS1 and CSS3, which had the higher VETiS implementation and participation rates, also indicated that they chose VETiS subjects because they were good for the ATAR and HSC results. Why students at these schools identified this as a primary reason for choosing VETiS, when students from CSS2 and CSS4 did not, is of interest to this research.

Students were informed about subjects through the various school processes and were provided with advice (sourced by students or initiated by advisers) by various stakeholders. Parents were identified by students and school staff as primary advisers in subject choices. There was consensus among staff at all schools that parent expectations for the post-school career pathways of their children may influence advice given. This confirms previous research which identified that parent expectations may influence the subject choices encouraged (Alloway et al., 2004).

In addition, qualitative methods were employed at each school by interviewing key personnel and conducting focus groups interviews with VETiS teachers to explore reasons why students chose particular subjects. These interviews provided data which also informed Specific Research Questions 2 and 3.

Consequently it was found that student choices were motivated by their perceptions about the relevance of VETiS to their post-school lives and interest in the subject area. The perceptions of students may have been influenced by the culture within the school which had the potential to promote or discourage participation based on the accessibility and reputation of these subjects. In addition, previous research identified that “the composition of secondary school peers is an important determinant” of a student’s subject choice in senior secondary study (Speckessser & Hedges, 2017, p. 12). Buchmann and Dalton (2002) concluded that choice is largely determined by the type of school the student attends. Additionally, they found that significant others (parents and peers) are important forces in shaping educational ambitions of students. The influence of culture is discussed in relation to Specific Research Question 3 in Section 8.3.
8.2 Specific Research Question 2

Analysis of data from each Case Site School identified similarities and differences among schools related to Specific Research Question 2, *what information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?* Subject advice was disseminated in schools through formal and informal processes. Similarly the informal advice provided by a range of people demonstrated both similarities and differences. These are now discussed with the aim of identifying what forms of information were also valued by students.

Subject advice came from a range of sources (Table 8-11). Parents, employers, siblings, friends, teachers and career advisers were identified as key advisers.

Table 8-11
*Cross-site subject advisers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career adviser</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value placed on school-organised subject advisory processes by students varied among schools (Table 8-12). However, students at all schools especially valued subject advisory processes that involved personal contact with the school staff or career adviser, either with parents present or without. Students also valued subject information sessions presented by school staff, again with or without parents present. Interestingly the career adviser was identified as a valuable source of subject advice at all schools; however, the allocation of hours to this role and qualifications of the career advisor varied among schools. Research undertaken by Galliott and Graham (2014), concluded that inequities in terms of educational resources such as career
advice may influence student career choice capability. This is interesting to this research as there appeared to be disparity among schools with regard to this role, which suggests that further research about career advisory processes that best meet individual student’s needs may be worthwhile.

Table 8-12
Cross-site ranked VETiS subject advisory processes valued by students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with career adviser without parents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with career adviser with parents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject information sessions with parents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject information sessions without parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with school staff without parents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8-1 shows student acknowledgement of advice provided for each subject chosen for all schools. Students were asked if they were given advice for each subject, who gave that advice and the nature of the advice given. Teachers were found to be the primary advisers followed by parents/care givers. Interesting to this research is that advice about choosing VETiS subjects was less frequent than advice about pursuing traditional subjects. English, mathematics and science received the most overall advice. Students from CSS3 acknowledged less VETiS advice compared to other schools in this study. This is of interest as this school had the highest VETiS participation rates, which may indicate that students made their own decisions based on what they saw and knew about the value of these subjects. This raises a question of whether advisers are less interested or less confident in providing advice in relation to VETiS.
The amount of advice given to students acknowledged in survey responses varied between schools (Table 8-13). At CSS3 students acknowledged less specific advice in favour of studying VETiS subjects than the other schools in this study. However, this school was the only school which experienced growth in both participation and implementation between 2005 and 2013. In contrast, 26% of students were advised to study VETiS at CSS4, however only 15% chose the subject. Similarly, 25% of students from CSS2 indicated that they were advised to study VETiS, but only 9% of those actually chose the subject. Twenty-four percent of students from CSS1 were advised to study VETiS, but only 11% chose the subject. The credibility and value of individual subject advice is worthy of further exploration.

At CSS2 and CSS4 it was identified that some non-VETiS teachers advise students to select VETiS classes for altruistic reasons such as to remove potentially disruptive/non-academic students from their classes and to subsequently increase the potential for their subject to perform better in the HSC results. This phenomenon was also identified in the literature review (Polesel et al., 2004b). This also raises the question about which students are perceived as the ‘type’ of student advised to study VETiS. Respondents from CSS3, which had the highest participation rates, did not identify a student stereotype as a barrier to selection (Table 8-8). Moreover, respondents from CSS1 and CSS3, with the higher participation rates, identified that

Figure 8-1 Subject advice percentage, all subjects, all schools
school leadership encouraged a reputation for VETiS as a subject suitable to all students (Table 8-6). Table 8-13 shows the percentage of students who were given specific advice about VETiS.

Table 8-13
Cross-site amount of advice for and against VETiS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice TO study VETiS and did</td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice TO study VETiS and did NOT</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice NOT to study VETiS and did NOT</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>0.8 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice NOT to study VETiS and did</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advisers who advised students “to study” VETiS varied among schools (Table 8-14). VETiS teachers in all schools advised students to study VETiS. Additionally, in CSS1, CSS3 and CSS4, this advice was also offered by non-VETiS teachers. Parents at all Case Site Schools also encouraged their child to undertake a VETiS subject. Employers advised students at CSS3 and CSS4 to study VETiS. Students at CSS2 and CSS3 encouraged their friends to study VETiS. Additionally, the career advisers from CSS1 and CSS4 advised in favour of VETiS subjects.

Table 8-14
Cross-site advisers to study VETiS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VETiS teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-VETiS teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career adviser</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reasons given for advice to study VETiS were similar, though variation occurred among schools (Table 8-15). One of the advantages for undertaking VETiS was its usefulness; students also indicated that they chose VETiS because it was useful (Table 8-4). Similarly, at all schools advice was given relating to the benefits of VETiS in future employment and careers; students also identified that future employment opportunities were a reason for choosing VETiS (Table 8-4). Additionally, the advice that VETiS subjects were enjoyable or interesting was received at CSS1, CSS2 and CSS4; however, genuine interest was indicated by students as a major reason for choice of VETiS at all schools (Table 8-4). The advice that the students would be successful in a VETiS subject was given at CSS2 and CSS4. This advice implied that the student was less likely to cope in a subject perceived to be more academic. Interestingly, these were the schools with the lower VETiS enrolments. This finding suggests that the perception of the types of student suited to VETiS at these schools were students with lower academic abilities. However, students at all schools indicated that ‘being good’ at the subject was a primary reason for choosing VETiS. Advice given to study VETiS due to the subject’s capacity to be good for the ATAR was only given at CSS3 and CSS4. Interestingly, these were the schools with the respectively highest and lowest VETiS enrolments. However, students indicated that they chose VETiS at CSS1 and CSS3 because it was perceived to be good for the ATAR (Table 8-4); interestingly these are the schools with higher VETiS enrolments. This suggests that VETiS subjects at these two schools have a reputation for making worthwhile ATAR contributions. This is another factor that can be attributed to the culture developed by school leadership.
Advisers who gave specific advice “not to study VETiS” varied among schools (Table 8-16). Each of the adviser categories which were acknowledged as giving negative advice were also categories which were indicated as providing positive advice in relation to selecting VETiS. This raises a potential question regarding the motivations underpinning advice, and the characteristics of student recipients of that advice. Non-VETiS teachers from CSS1, CSS2 and CSS4 advised students not to study a VETiS course. In contrast, some parents in CSS1 and CSS3 advised their children not to study VETiS. Older students and siblings also advised students away from VETiS subject selection at CSS2 and CSS3. This suggests, on the basis of the findings in this research, that individuals providing subject advice are influential in subject selection decisions, but only in part, as many students did not follow the advice given. This phenomenon is consistent with previous research that found the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Useful skills</strong></td>
<td>X (P, CA)</td>
<td>X (P)</td>
<td>X (T, N, P)</td>
<td>X (CA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good for career/job opportunities</strong></td>
<td>X (T)</td>
<td>X (T)</td>
<td>X (E,T)</td>
<td>X (T, E, CA, P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enjoyable/interesting</strong></td>
<td>X (P, N)</td>
<td>X (F)</td>
<td>X (P)</td>
<td>X (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worthwhile for future</strong></td>
<td>X (T)</td>
<td>X (CA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualifications</strong></td>
<td>X (T)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Would be successful/easier</strong></td>
<td>X (P, T)</td>
<td>X (T)</td>
<td>X (T, CC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good for ATAR/university</strong></td>
<td>X (P)</td>
<td>X (N, P)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fun to do together</strong></td>
<td>X (F)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: P (Parent), CA (Career adviser), T (VETiS teacher), N (Non-VETiS teacher), CC (Curriculum coordinator), F (Friend)*
importance placed on subject advice varied among students (Buchmann & Dalton, 2002).

Table 8-16

Cross-site advisers not to study VETiS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-VETiS teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers at the compulsory interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons given not to study VETiS also showed similarity and variation across the schools (Table 8-17). The reason of a VETiS subject being detrimental to an ATAR score motivated some of the advice at CSS1, CSS3 and CSS4. Some students at CSS3 and CSS4 were advised that VETiS subjects were either not useful or a waste of time. This practice contrasts with advice given to other students by parents and siblings, which emphasised that the skills gained were useful for post-school life (Table 8-15). A student from CSS2 was advised that the workload in VETiS subjects was too heavy. These contrasting opinions from advisers highlight the diversity of views about VETiS held by people who may be in the position to provide advice to students. Confusion about VETiS was raised as a barrier to VETiS subject selection at CSS2 and CSS3 (Table 8-8); this raises a question concerning the validity and quality of advice given to students and the motivations of the advisers.
Table 8-17
Cross-site advice not to study VETiS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not good for ATAR</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work load</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should do ‘smart' subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste of time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not useful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N (Non-VETiS teacher), P (Parents), Tc (Teachers at the compulsory interview), O (Older students), S (Siblings)

The data suggest that written information in the form of a subject selection handbook was largely the same across all schools. However, the tone of advice varied among schools. The tone describing VETiS in handbooks at CSS1 and CSS3 (with the highest enrolments) was generally more positive than CSS2 and CSS4 (with the lowest enrolments). The written information at CSS2 indicated that VETiS subjects were “Category B and not as rigorous” and in CSS4 the information indicated they were “mainly designed for non-university aspirants”. CSS4 also placed VETiS subject information to the rear of the handbook, immediately before the ‘life skills’ subjects designed for students with special needs. This practice may have resulted in an unintended perception that VETiS is more suitable to students with lower academic ability. The way in which written information is presented may reflect the school culture and the value leadership places on VETiS.

TVET written information varied among the schools (Table 8-18). CSS1 specified that limited places were available for TVET. This information may have discouraged some students. CSS2 noted that there was a $500 fee with potential for further fees for TVET study, which may have been a barrier for some students. The information differed in CSS3 documents, which referenced TVET with little detailed information about TVET. This lack of information potentially explains the low enrolment in TVET at this school. It was also identified at CSS3 that staff believed that the school had the capacity to deliver a sufficient variety of VETiS to meet student needs. CSS4
gave clear information about TVET and the options available; this school also experienced higher TVET participation.

Table 8-18
Cross-site written information about TVET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conditions placed on TVET</td>
<td>Limited places</td>
<td>$500 per TVET course, plus potential future fees for TVET</td>
<td>Refers to TAFE delivery, no information on TVET</td>
<td>Clear information on TVET</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SBAT written information varied across the schools (Table 8-19). CSS1 gave clear information, noting that students must find their own employer. CSS2 gave limited information regarding SBATs. CSS3 referred to SBAT availability within the internally delivered VETiS program only. CSS4 offered clear and factual information regarding SBATs. This observation suggests that information either included or omitted may encourage or discourage SBAT interest.

Table 8-19
Cross-site written information about SBAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conditions placed on SBATs</td>
<td>Must find own employer, clear information</td>
<td>Limited information</td>
<td>Refers to SBAT availability in VET subjects offered, no general information on SBATs</td>
<td>Clear information on SBATs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2.1 Summary Specific Research Question 2

The findings identified in Specific Research Question 2 show the importance of information provided to parents and students when making subject choices (Table 8-20). Five influential factors concerning the credibility of advice given to students
concerning VETiS subject choices emerged from the data. These are now briefly discussed and will be expanded on in Chapter 9.

Table 8-20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject information</td>
<td>a) Sources of information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of the career adviser</td>
<td>b) Formality of information processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and subject advice</td>
<td>c) The nature of VETiS advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal subject advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of subject advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information about subjects is provided to students through structured school processes and also informally. Subject information processes may reflect the institutional aims and ambitions of the school (Foskett et al., 2008). All school-initiated processes designed to disseminate subject advice were valued by students, however the most useful advice originated from personal contact with school staff or the career adviser. It was found that the type of career advice varied among schools and this may have influenced subject selection choices (Alloway et al., 2004). Career adviser roles differed between schools, in various ways including:

- Qualification requirements: Masters in Education (Careers), In-service training or none;
- Time allocation: 0.8FTE to none; and
- Career resourcing such as a designated room, technology and printed information.

The position of career adviser was filled at CSS1 and CSS4 through formal recruitment processes, where applicants justified their suitability and qualifications for the position through an application and interview process. Consequently, the role had a recognised status and place on the school organisational chart. In contrast, CSS2 and CSS3 incorporated the role into the duties of other roles within the school.

Informal advice was provided to students, teachers, friends and employers. Advice in favour of VETiS related to the subject’s usefulness and relevance post-school;
negative advice tended to be based on the lack of worth of VETiS in an ATAR score. Teachers were identified as primary advisers in subject selections at all schools. However, the advice may have been motivated by the needs of the student or in some cases the adviser (Alloway et al., 2004).

Staff from CSS1 and CSS3 indicated that the school culture promoted VETiS as a subject suitable for all students; these were also the schools which exhibited the higher participation rates. This differed from responses from CSS2 and CSS4 which noted that some non-VETiS staff believed that VETiS was more suited to students who were academically weak. Furthermore, the status of VETiS may have been reflected in perceptions by the school community “aligned to which type of student was suitable for, and subsequently enrolled” in a VETiS subject (Alloway et al., 2004, p. 65).

This study identified that school leaders made decisions about how students are informed about subjects. The study also revealed that school leaders promote various school cultures and that the opinions of those in leadership positions may influence perceptions about various subject areas through subject information dissemination processes. This confirms the findings of previous research which identified that a student’s choice of subject may be influenced by the school ethos, school culture and the constituency of the school community (Foskett et al., 2008).

The accessibility and attractiveness of VETiS subjects was able to be increased through school processes such as their placement within timetable structures. CSS3, which experienced the highest participation in these subjects, offered VETiS on multiple subject lines, and also offered the same VETiS subjects on different lines. This enabled more opportunities for selection, in contrast to CSS4 which offered all VETiS subjects on one line.

Leadership decisions about subjects had the potential to enable VETiS selection or, alternatively, to make selection difficult. Leadership at CSS1 and CSS3 enabled VETiS by promoting this subject area as suitable to all students. Promotion of this kind may have increased student confidence about the benefits of VETiS on the ATAR score and HSC results, which were identified as reasons in these schools why students chose VETiS. Interestingly, these schools had higher participation and
implementation rates. In contrast, the schools in which a perception was thought to exist that a stereotypical VETiS student was one with less academic ability (CSS2 and CSS4), were the schools which exhibited lower implementation and participation.

8.3 Specific Research Question 3

An analysis of the data from each of the schools identified similarities and differences among schools relating to Specific Research Question 3, how do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools? The reasons underpinning leadership decisions about VETiS subject implementation exhibited both similarities and differences among the Case Site Schools; these are now discussed.

The school personnel who made decisions on which subjects to implement varied among schools (Table 8-21). Some schools had a collaborative decision-making process that involved teams of five or more, whereas in others the decisions were made by two individuals. Previous research has identified that school leaders can act as gatekeepers regarding distributed leadership by creating opportunities or imposing boundaries (Bouwmans et al., 2017). It was also found that innovations in VETiS require teamwork and distributed leadership so that the expertise of team members can be utilised. CSS1 and CSS3 involved a large team which included the principal and senior executive team. The benefits of a large team approach is consistent with the research undertaken by Falk (2003), which highlighted that VETiS was enabled by a leadership structure which was not the province of a solitary individual or restricted to a style of leadership. The final decisions on which subjects to implement were made by a team of only two in CSS2 and CSS4, which also had the lowest VETiS enrolments. Interestingly, CSS3 was the only school that included someone with VETiS teacher training in the decision-making team; this school also had the highest enrolments. This finding suggests that the presence of a person in a subject selection team with VETiS experience may positively influence the reputation and status of these subjects within the school curriculum. This concept is consistent with findings of a parliamentary review into VETiS which identified that a principal with a background in VETiS may be beneficial in bringing cultural change supportive of these subjects (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2004).
Implementation decisions were influenced by various considerations (Table 8-22). Teacher qualifications and student interest underpinned subject implementation decisions at all schools. The facilities and resources of the school influenced VETiS subject implementation decisions at CSS1 and CSS4. The reputation of the school, competition for enrolments, a desire to provide for all student abilities and teacher enthusiasm influenced which subjects were offered at CSS1, CSS2 and CSS3. Respondents from CSS1 and CSS3 indicated that leadership encouraged a culture where VETiS subjects were suitable for all students. This consideration suggests that providing subjects that cater for a broad range of student abilities and interests, such as VETiS, was a potential motivator behind subject implementation decisions. These were the schools with the highest VETiS enrolments. In addition, respondents acknowledged that the positive reputation of VETiS within CSS3 and recognition of how VETiS subjects addressed a Catholic ethos of education were influential in subject implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large subject decision-making team</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small subject decision-making team</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS teaching or industry experience in decision-making team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cross-site subject implementation decision makers*
Table 8-22
Cross-site influences that contribute to VETiS implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher qualifications</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student interest</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School reputation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition for enrolments</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing for all student abilities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher enthusiasm</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities/resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reputation of VETiS</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits with a Catholic ethos of education</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the needs of students who would normally have left before the age of 17</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were major influences that enabled VETiS implementation (Table 8-22); some of these were also identified as reasons that enabled VETiS subject selection (Table 8-23). A common enabler in each school was the availability of qualified and enthusiastic teachers. However, the enthusiasm of VETiS teachers may not be sufficient to influence the implementation and uptake of these subjects, as there remains variation between schools. Significantly, CSS3, which evidenced the highest participation rates, also identified the greatest number of enabling influences. The enabling influences at this school not only facilitated VETiS implementation but demonstrated support from leadership through timetable accessibility to students. This timetable structure allowed for and encouraged selection of multiple VETiS subjects as well as the ability to choose from a variety of VETiS offerings on each timetable line. Research undertaken by Polesel et al. (2004b) emphasised that successful implementation of VETiS included adequate resourcing, reasonable costs, clear academic pathways, a wholly supportive principal, positive advice to students, supportive timetabling and an attitudinal change in favour of VETiS.

At CSS3 a positive reputation for VETiS was identified as an enabler to implementation. The reputation of VETiS led the researcher to assume that the processes and culture promoted within this school supported the establishment of a
positive regard for VETiS subjects, which was ultimately reflected in growth in both the number of these subjects implemented and the number of students choosing these subjects. This finding reinforces the research conducted by Clarke (2012), which highlighted that a key step in enhancing VETiS was the early exposure and embedding of VETiS in the core business and culture of schools.

Table 8-23
Cross-site enabling influences VETiS subject implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic qualified VETiS teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition for enrolment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities/resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal with VETiS experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade-experienced teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility within the timetable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple opportunities for VETiS selection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reputation for VETiS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a Catholic school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive non-VETiS teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in mandatory leaving age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of VETiS subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan support from RTO</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student career intentions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barriers to VETiS subject implementation similarly varied among schools (Table 8-24). The willingness of teachers to deliver VETiS subjects was identified at CSS1, CSS2 and CSS3. The reasons underpinning this lack of willingness were identified in the previous chapters as being due to the considerable amount of extra work involved in assessing VETiS units of competency, organising work placement and the amount of paperwork required for compliance. The nature of teacher qualifications was identified as both an enabling influence (Table 8-22) and a barrier. This prohibiting influence also related to compliance with the National Standards for VET...
and rules related to teacher qualifications. At CSS2 it was found that negative attitudes by leadership were a barrier to implementation. This supports previous research that found that some staff may view VETiS as somewhere to place students who are “unsuited to an academic curriculum” (Clarke, 2015) or ‘for the dummies’, indeed the same terminology was used by one respondent from that school. CSS4 identified the greatest number of barriers to VETiS subject implementation. This school also evidenced the greatest decline in VETiS participation and implementation between 2005 and 2013.

CSS4, which exhibited the greatest decline in VETiS participation and implementation, identified the poor retention risks associated with the stereotypical VETiS student as a barrier to subject implementation. However, previous research has identified that “not all retention is good, and not all early leaving is bad”, emphasising that schools need to take into account student needs when considering school subject implementation (Atweh et al., 2005, p. 7).
Table 8-24
Cross-site barriers to VETiS subject implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>CSS1</th>
<th>CSS2</th>
<th>CSS3</th>
<th>CSS4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of willingness to teach VETiS</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher qualifications</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative attitude from some non-VETiS staff</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort zone with traditional subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS student stereotype likely to leave before completing Year 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition between faculties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of VETiS coordinator inclusion in subject implementation decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited by RTO scope of registration</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative attitude towards VETiS by a person in leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership vision for the reputation and culture of the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of recognition for the role of VETiS coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.3.1 Summary Specific Research Question 3

The findings identified in Specific Research Question 3 provided information concerning the ways in which educational leaders implement VETiS programs; these can be categorised as themes three, four and five (Table 8-25). These themes are the capacity of schools to implement VETiS, school leaders’ beliefs concerning VETiS implementation and the culture of the school which have been identified from seven influences these are now discussed.
Table 8.25

Influences emerging in relation to Specific Research Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision makers</td>
<td>3. Schools capacities to implement VETiS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>4. School leadership beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resourcing</td>
<td>5. School culture and implementation of VETiS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enablers and barriers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator inequity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership commitment and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School ambitions and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reputation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A clear finding emerging from the study was that each school's capacity to implement VETiS depended on a number of issues including leadership, and teacher qualifications. In this study, it was found that subject implementation teams in schools with higher VETiS implementation were those which involved more than two people, and included the principal. The commitment of the principal influenced VETiS implementation, a finding confirming Schneyder's (2002) research. CSS1 and CSS3 evidenced large subject implementation teams; these schools experienced higher VETiS participation. In contrast, the implementation teams at CSS2 and CSS4 involved only the principal and one other member of staff.

Teacher qualifications underpinned subject implementation decisions at all schools. Indeed, the passion and enthusiasm of teachers was identified as an enabler for VETiS implementation. However, competition for enrolments identified that parents and students are also major stakeholders in subject implementation, confirming previous research (Klatt et al., 2016).

Teachers were also identified as barriers to the implementation of VETiS, specifically the willingness of teachers to teach these subjects. It was indicated that the extra paperwork and compliance involved in VETiS deterred some teachers. Similarly, the lack of recognition of the role of VETiS coordinator had a negative influence on the enthusiasm of individuals to undertake this role.
The findings suggest school cultures and priorities which promoted VETiS as suitable for all students influenced higher participation and implementation of these subjects. In contrast, schools in which some non-VETiS staff perceived that VETiS was for the academically weak were schools which also experienced lower implementation rates. It was identified that in CSS3, which had the greatest implementation and uptake of VETiS, the principal had trained to be a VETiS teacher. It was of particular interest to this research to consider whether this influence may have contributed towards the positive culture of VETiS evidenced within that school.

8.4 Conclusion

The data provided information which has the potential to explain why there is variation between schools. Six issues appeared to be distinguishing characteristics of the schools: culture; leadership; timetabling; parity of subjects; teacher enthusiasm; and credibility of advice. Although discussed separately, these are inter-related and indicative of the whole school culture.

Culture: The data suggested that the reasons why CSS3 experienced consistently high VETiS implementation and uptake were underpinned by the type of culture which was developed by leadership. This culture promoted a positive reputation and status of VETiS subjects, and reduced the potential for VETiS students to be seen as a negative stereotype. The previous sections have identified a range of influences that contributed to the continued growth in implementation and participation of VETiS in the period between 2005 and 2013 at this school.

Leadership: Leadership at CSS3 provided more opportunities for students to choose VETiS within timetable structures than the other schools. These opportunities included offering VETiS on multiple timetable lines, enabling students to select VETiS against a range of other subjects. It also enabled students to choose more than one VETiS subject. Offering VETiS on more than one line also resulted in more than one class of the same VETiS subject being conducted. The inclusion of someone in the subject decision-making team with VETiS experience, in this case the principal, was indicated to be an enabler for VETiS implementation. This finding confirms previous research which identified that a principal’s background in VETiS assists in bringing
about cultural change supportive of these programs (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2004).

*Timetabling of subjects:* The timetabling at CSS2 and CSS4, which were the schools with the lowest VETiS participation, was identified as a barrier to participation. The processes and strategies employed to develop the timetable originate in decisions made by school leadership. This suggests that school leadership may promote subject areas in line with the focus of educational outcomes and reputation desired for the school. A respondent from CSS4, which had the lowest VETiS participation, indicated that the focus at this school was on academic achievements and high ATAR scores. This focus may have been to the detriment of VETiS implementation and uptake. Foskett et al. (2008) identified that schools which have an emphasis on academic pathways and examination outcomes can reinforce parent and student ambitions and views due to school expectation. Furthermore, Hargreaves et al. (1996) noted that schools with a predominantly academic orientation may have a narrow definition for success and achievement. Importantly, McKenzie’s (2000) research identified that schools need to reconcile the differences between organisation and cultural goals and between traditional and vocational learning in order for VETiS to be effectively embedded in the curriculum offerings.

*VETiS and Catholic ethos:* CSS3 respondents emphasised that VETiS subjects aligned with a Catholic school ethos. School ethos can be described as the distinctive beliefs and values defining the philosophy of a school (Donnelly, 2000). Donnelly notes that ethos is also a formal expression of a school authority’s (Catholic education system) aims and objectives for education. NSW Catholic education aims to foster individual student self-esteem and to contribute to a community that is skilled, respectful of diversity and highly educated (Catholic Schools NSW, 2019). VETiS subjects are valued by schools as they provide an education that suits a variety of students offering skills and qualifications for employment, enjoyment and successful educational outcomes together within the secondary school certificate (Polesel et al., 2004a).

*Parity of subjects:* Both CSS1 and CSS3 respondents indicated that VETiS subjects were suitable for all students. These schools had the greatest participation rates. This finding suggests that a stereotypical view of VETiS subjects as being suitable for
students with lower academic ability did not occur in general at these schools. In contrast CSS2 and CSS4, which had the lowest participation rates, appeared to be influenced by perceptions of a VETiS student stereotype. Such perceptions has the potential to deter some students from selecting these subjects. This finding suggests that processes within schools that promote VETiS as suitable for a broad range of students is positively reflected in the culture within the school community about the status of VETiS and the type of student who should participate in these subjects. Previous research which found that the ethos, culture and members of the school community can influence the choices and preferences which emerge in students (Foskett et al., 2008) supports this conclusion.

Teacher commitment: There was consensus among respondents from all schools that the added workload involved in VETiS delivery lessened the enthusiasm and commitment of teachers about delivering this subject. However, respondents from CSS3 did not indicate that this was a barrier; indeed respondents from this school identified more enablers and fewer barriers to VETiS implementation. This suggests that the positive culture for VETiS in this school is actualised in all processes involving implementation and participation.

Credibility of advice: Independent advice emerged as a potential contributor to decision-making. Subject advisers and formal subject information dissemination practices were similar across schools. However, one important difference occurred at CSS3, which had the highest participation rates and promoted VETiS as suitable for all students. Leadership at this school invited the Board of Studies Liaison Officer (BOSLO) to present at the subject information evening. The BOSLO presentation was intended to show students how the various subjects performed within the HSC results. This presentation included the value of VETiS and the potential for VETiS to achieve a high ATAR score. These school-driven practices designed to dispel any myths about VETiS and promote all subjects fairly to all students may ultimately be reflected in the culture of CSS3.

What appears to have emerged from the data is that there is greater coherence, greater valuing and leadership support at CSS1 and CSS3. This may explain the variance between the uptake and implementation of VETiS among the schools studied. The next chapter discusses the findings.
CHAPTER 9: Discussion of findings

9.1 Introduction

This research aimed to explore the possible reasons that may affect participation in VETiS. This aim was explored from two perspectives; the implementation of VETiS programs, and participation of students in VETiS subjects. The previous chapter documented the key influences across all four schools; these were reflected in the characteristics of the four schools. This chapter identifies principles and processes that provide insights as to why there was variation across schools in the participation in and implementation of VETiS.

The previous chapter identified six characteristics that the schools in this study differed on. These characteristics are interrelated and indicative of the school culture and the way VETiS is perceived, implemented and promoted. These characteristics are: school culture, leadership, timetabling, teacher enthusiasm and credibility of advice. Influences and enabling factors within these characteristics were discrete events or processes that contributed to decision-making, and were ultimately reflected in the participation or implementation of VETiS. These influences and enabling factors have contributed to the development of themes which address the research questions.

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of human development (1994, 2005; Lichtenberger, 2012) acknowledges that decisions are influenced by a range of external pulls and pushes. He acknowledged that other people, systems, environment and culture influence decisions made by individuals and organisations. Within the model of Bronfenbrenner, students are influenced at the microsystem level (immediate environment) in VETiS subject choice. Their microsystem consists of the school culture, family, friends and future employment considerations. School leadership decisions are influenced by the microsystem (immediate environment, such as teachers, parents, religious nature of school), and the exosystem (indirect environment, such as government policy, economic considerations and the education system). However, school cultures are developed over time by school leadership with the principal at the top. Consequently, many decisions and
processes reflecting the school culture originate from the beliefs and educational philosophy of the principal and lie within that individual’s microsystem (immediate environment, such as family, significant role models, life experiences, education, career ambitions and their current students’ parent expectations).

Data were gathered in relation to Specific Research Questions 1 and 2 from students, school key personnel and parents in order to examine the perceptions of these different stakeholders about student decision-making for choice of HSC subject. Information gathered in order to inform Specific Research Question 3 was gained from school and diocese key stakeholders.

Following the discussion of findings gained from the research questions, a summation of themes is presented in Figure 9-4, which acts as a synthesis of understandings. The synthesis of key findings (Section 9.5) will conclude this chapter and show the insights gained which give greater understanding about the research problem, being, that there appears to be no consistency in the offering of VETiS by systemic Catholic schools in rural NSW and their participation by students. This is significant as the values and ethos of a Catholic diocesan school could be assumed to be similar as they operate under the same RTO, diocesan and state management organisations.

9.2 Key findings informing Specific Research Question 1

The first Specific Research Question that focused the conduct of this research was, what influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects? The rationale that motivated this question concerned students’ and parents’ reasons for subject choices. An individual is influenced by a range of connecting external pulls and pushes when making decisions (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). There are commonalities and differences identified as influences which discourage VETiS selection. Data emerged from interviews, focus groups and student surveys in response to enabling influences and student reasons for VETiS subject choice. Four themes emerged that influenced decision-making process. These were: (a) school capacity and culture; (b) information dissemination
processes; (c) student interest and perceived relevance of options; and (d) teachers’ roles.

9.2.1 School capacity and culture

Important in facilitating students’ engagement with VETiS were influences related to the schools’ capacity to deliver programs and a school culture that was accepting.

Availability of industry-standard equipment and industry-qualified teachers was identified as an enabler in all schools (Table 8-23). This conclusion confirmed Riele and Crump’s (2002) findings which noted that the authentic nature of learning in VETiS was enhanced by using industry-designed training packages as syllabus documents and practical learning activities including group projects, self-paced learning and industry relevant projects.

School ethos, culture and the constituency of the school community may influence how students choose their subjects for study (Foskett et al., 2008). For example, if a school marketed VETiS using enthusiastic staff, who engaged students with current and quality information, then there is a likelihood of increased VETiS participation. Examples of additional marketing strategies which presented an unbiased and positive view of VETiS were evident in CSS3, which exhibited the highest participation rates in this study. Such experiences reflect the policy and educational values generated by an individual school’s leadership team. These conclusions confirmed research that indicate that school leaders who devalue VETiS in subject marketing because of its apparent lack of academic respectability, fail to attract a constituency for VETiS (Foskett et al., 2008; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2004).

9.2.2 Information dissemination processes

Individual schools adopted a variety of strategies determined by school leadership to convey information about subjects to stakeholders. Discussed in this section are sources of advice, language adopted and mode of delivery.
Even though all schools offered whole of Year 10 subject information sessions and written information to participants, the content of the presentations exhibited considerable variations. Some schools planned time for detailed VETiS presentations by experienced VETiS teachers at information sessions. Not surprisingly, these schools tended to have higher VETiS participation. In contrast, other schools used curriculum coordinators, who offered only general information about VETiS.

The school which had the highest participation in VETiS, and the widest academic range involved in VETiS study employed a Board of Studies Liaison Officer (BOSLO) in subject presentations. This initiative was particularly helpful because it provided factual and credible information about the benefits of VETiS. In particular this presentation provided independent information devoid of possible bias that school officers may have. The BOSLO offered examples concerning how VETiS subjects can enhance ATAR scores as well as offer students post-school skills and qualifications.

The language adopted in written information differed between schools. Schools with higher VETiS participation tended to present VETiS information using positive language. In contrast, the tone generated in the communication provided by other schools implied VETiS was especially appropriate for academically underachieving students.

However, participants universally identified that the most helpful source of information came from personal interviews with the career adviser and/or school staff. The interview process varied between schools. Some schools planned for compulsory interviews to be conducted by school staff attended by students with their parents. In contrast, other schools provided personal interviews upon request with voluntary parent attendance. Some schools involved a broader mix of school staff in the interview process, ranging from teachers to subject coordinators. In contrast, other schools provided this service with a qualified career adviser. Interestingly, participants did not differentiate between the different personnel employed but appreciated the personal nature of information provided.
The likelihood of obtaining increased post-school employment and career opportunities were identified by students as primary reasons for VETiS subject choice. Therefore, appropriate career advice was important to guide students in making informed decisions. However, not all members of the various school leadership teams shared the belief that the employment of a career adviser (with career educator qualifications) was a necessary strategy in order to offer adequate career guidance to students. One school employed a designated full-time trained career adviser. In contrast, at another school the curriculum coordinator (with no formal training in careers) voluntarily accepted the responsibility.

The career advisory role is important as previous research has shown a causal relationship between subjects studied at school and post-school occupational success and job satisfaction (Athanasou, 2009, pp. 49-50). Indeed, career goal discussions and subject interest may encourage students to choose relevant subjects in which they can succeed (Atweh et al., 2005). The provision of quality personalised subject advice to students from an experienced career adviser is important for meaningful subject choice and implementation of relevant subjects.

Parents were identified as primary advisers of their children, which is consistent with previous research (Cuconato & Walther, 2015). However, at least some information provided by parents may be motivated by their personal ambitions for their child. Such ambitions may not reflect the child’s academic abilities or career aspirations. Cuconato and Walther (2015) also found that some parents’ involvement in their children’s education may not only be as a result of their concerns about their children’s wellbeing but also about concerns for the family’s future status. Some schools acknowledged the influence of parents as an information source which was more highly valued than others. This recognition was reflected in the information strategies implemented by schools. Consequently, some schools required parents to attend subject information sessions or interviews. The motivation for this strategy was to provide accurate information concerning possible educational pathways appropriate for their children’s interests and ability in order to better equip parents as advisers.
It was reported that leadership in one school used such opportunity to promote the strong academic culture within the school, at the expense of VETiS. Interestingly, participants from the school with history of greatest decline in VETiS participation noted that school leadership promoted university as the most successful pathway from school. “There is a big push, a result of public perception and social change that all kids should have aspirations to go to university” (Tori, TFG4, 5/12/2012).

9.2.3 Timetabling

The timetable was a potential barrier in the Case Site Schools. Supportive timetables were those that offered students choices of VETiS on multiple lines against a range of subject areas. These timetables enabled students to take more than one VETiS subject and to choose additional subjects of interest. In contrast, timetables which were designed to restrict VETiS choice to one line or to place VETiS subjects against other subjects that students saw as essential, such as mathematics, were identified as barriers. This practice was of concern as school leadership decisions may have the capacity to promote or discourage specific subject areas through manipulation or control of the timetable. Consequently, the parity of esteem for VETiS subject choice may be jeopardised through timetabling strategies employed by schools (Polesel et al., 2004b).

9.2.4 Student interest and relevance of options

Student interest in a subject area influenced decision-making in relation to VETiS. Interest is understood as “a way of talking and thinking about the way that people have come to pursue fundamental goals and values” (Swedberg, 2005, p. 104). However, interest has two dimensions: individual interest and situational interest (Schiefele, 2012). Individual interest can be attributed to some sustained emotional or feeling response to being involved in a task or a perception that the task has some ultimate value. Situational interest is a fleeting response to being involved in some task or activity. Consequently, according to previous research (Athanasou, 2009; Whitely & Porter, 1999) students were more likely to be successful in subjects that genuinely interested them in terms of enjoyment and value, that is, where there was an individual interest in the subject.
This research found that students were likely to choose VETiS for the practical nature of learning they offered as well as hands-on activities when developing industry skills, according to parents, students and teachers. Research undertaken by Reile and Crump (2002) confirmed that practical learning activities suited the educational needs of some students, and indicated that academic success may be higher in VETiS courses than in traditional subject areas for these students. Interview and survey data indicated that the practical nature of VETiS was an enabler in subject selection choice in all case schools. The hands-on learning style of VETiS courses appealed to students who enjoyed practical learning strategies (Klatt et al., 2016; Smith & Dalton, 2005). Authentic project work where students can see relevance to post-school activities has been found to be important to students who chose VETiS (Riele & Crump, 2002).

Other influences that motivated students to choose VETiS included interest in an industry area, the types of skills gained, equipment used and industry experiences. Likewise, post-school career intentions, gaining employability skills, real experience and gaining qualifications motivated students to choose VETiS subjects. Research undertaken by Clarke (2015) confirmed that students chose VETiS subjects to assist post-school transition into careers in industry (Clarke, 2015). These understandings are consistent with the findings in Athanasou’s research (2009), which concluded that schools which promoted the wider benefits of studying VETiS—which included the capacity for the subject to be used effectively in the ATAR for university entrance, job opportunities and skills for life post-school—were more likely to have higher numbers and a broader academic mix in VETiS courses.

Additionally, participation in VETiS was more likely to occur if students believed a school’s programs offered them opportunities to acquire relevant knowledge and skills (Fullarton, 2001); that is, there was interest based on the value of the subject. CSS3, which had the highest participation and implementation of VETiS, promoted these subjects to all students by emphasising how useful the programs were in post-school life, including university. It was reported that the school demonstrated to students that VETiS subjects were valuable in ATAR scores, through examples of previous students’ success; additional presentations by the BOSLO to support this.
claim were provided when marketing VETiS subjects. The validity of such an approach was confirmed by Crump and Stanley (2005), who concluded that some students perform better in their VETiS examination for ATAR scores than in other subjects which are supposedly more academic. Not surprisingly, students perform better in subjects that interest them by incorporating active ‘practical’ learning strategies in their delivery. Indeed, VETiS courses which incorporate skills and knowledge perceived to be relevant with the demands of post-school employment opportunities become personally satisfying for students. Clearly, there is a relationship between perceived enjoyment as a reason for students to select a subject and their later academic success (Hidi, 1990).

However, selection of subjects was constrained. This research concluded that members of the school leadership believed that students were primary stakeholders in decisions related to subjects. They argued that subjects delivered at schools were identified as a result of student choice. However, students were not involved until a defined list of subjects was publicised and thus choice was restricted to what was deemed appropriate by administration. Previous research also identified that subject choices in the senior years are usually constructed by the school (Atweh et al. 2005). Students’ perspective contradicts the belief of leadership that it was the students who drove subject implementation.

9.2.5 Teachers’ roles and commitment

Some school staff believed the VETiS ‘type’ of students had a preference (or had historically “performed” better) in practical learning strategies. Staff from schools that experienced higher participation in VETiS indicated that many students enjoyed a variety of learning strategies, which may have included a combination of both theory-based subjects and practical-based subjects, a finding also identified in Klatt et al.’s (2016) research. Learning preferences refer to the way an individual typically prefers to go about their learning.

This research found that schools that experienced higher participation rates had promoted VETiS as a subject suitable to all students and did not stereotype VETiS students to a particular type of learner or student. Interestingly, there was potential
for teachers of non-VETiS subjects to be more positive about VETiS for non-academically inclined students; these teachers saw it as a way of encouraging them away from the more academic subjects. This negative marketing contributes to the perceived status of VETiS and of the type of student who undertakes these subjects. In contrast, VETiS teachers were found to be positive about VETiS for all students regardless of academic ability (Polesel et al., 2004b). Teachers who inspired students to choose a VETiS subject were passionate about this subject area, were enthusiastic and had industry expertise. Continued passion and enthusiasm for teaching VETiS was threatened by the additional workload for VETiS teachers caused by work placement, assessment requirements, paperwork and compliance. This study confirms research undertaken by Harreveld (2015) which found that the continually changing compliance requirements caused confusion, reluctance and resentment among staff.

VETiS teachers were required to meet rigorous standards for delivery and assessment which included keeping evidence of student skills and knowledge, complying with the rules of assessment and maintaining industry/assessment currency ("Vocational Education and Training Act 2005," Aus). Because VETiS courses are nationally-accredited, the requirements of VETiS teachers are the same as those for any VET trainer (including those in adult education RTO environments such as TAFE). Consequently, the national regulator, ASQA, ensured the qualifications delivered at schools, and the skills of school students, were of the same quality as that of any other RTO. However, schools are different to other RTOs as they integrate VET qualifications within the Higher School Certificate; therefore teachers must also hold secondary teaching qualifications. All RTOs were audited regularly by ASQA to ensure compliance with all standards.

However, teachers were more passionate and enthusiastic about VETiS subjects, when the value of VETiS subjects and additional work involved was recognised by school leadership. Evidence of school leadership support included time release for teachers to complete the additional work involved, as well as VETiS teachers’ inclusion in school leadership teams and in subject advisory processes. Consequently, leadership support was identified as a potential barrier to VETiS selection. Additional support strategies recognised the quality of VETiS programs.
through opportunities to make the subject visible in public celebrations of achievement, demonstration of VETiS student skills and displays of workmanship. These research findings are important since school leadership indicated that teacher availability was a potential barrier in subject implementation decisions.

The qualification requirements of VETiS teachers places extra resourcing considerations on the teaching of VETiS subjects (Malley et al., 2002). However, leadership in the current research identified risks associated with the replacement of VETiS teachers, especially if the need for replacement was sudden, as this discouraged further VETiS offerings. This risk was higher than in other subject areas as only teachers with the required industry qualifications and the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment may teach VETiS (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015; Malley et al., 2002). Other concerns affecting VETiS subject implementation include the cost of training VETiS teachers, and problems with replacing VETiS teachers with similarly qualified teachers at times of absences due to in-servicing or industry currency activities.

9.2.6 Conclusion

The reasons that underpin student/parent decision-making on VETiS subjects are varied and influenced by the perceptions of others about the student, the status of VETiS and school processes. These influences include the negative potential of stereotyping students, timetabling, subject dissemination processes and teacher enthusiasm or commitment.

9.3 Key findings informing Specific Research Question 2

The second Specific Research Question that focused the conduct of this research was, *what information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?* This question pursued the credibility of advice provided about VETiS subject choices. Three dominant themes emerged from the data which were: (a) sources of information; (b) formality of advisory processes; and (c) the nature of the content of advice.
9.3.1 Sources of information

Both career advisers and teachers were tasked with providing information which influenced decisions about subject choice. These sources of information are now discussed in terms of the role of the career adviser and the part played by teachers.

9.3.1.1 The role of the career adviser

Student survey responses indicated that students in all Case Site Schools appreciated subject advice from credible career advisers. Research undertaken by Warton identified that “64%” of students gain subject advice from career advisers (Warton, 1997a, p. 6), Rothman and Hillman’s research noted even higher findings (2008). According to key staff interviewed some schools in this study required the career adviser to have formal qualifications and others did not. Consequently, there were variations between schools relating to who provides formal career advice and presumably also between the quality of advice.

Key staff and teacher interviews/focus groups identified that availability and time allocations for this role also differed between schools participating in this research. This ranged from 0.8FTE at CSS2 to voluntary incorporation into other duties CSS1. Subject information dissemination and advice involving the school career adviser was valued over other forms of advice received by students according to student survey data. Research undertaken by Alloway et al. (2004; Rothman & Hillman, 2008), also found that the type of career advice varies among schools and impacts on subject selection. Thus the quantity and quality of advice may partially explain why there was inconsistency in VETiS participation rates among schools in this study.

Students and parent survey responses identified that subjects studied at school should be relevant or useful after leaving school. These were identified as subjects that complemented career goals and supported students in post-school transition to employment or education. A recommendation for further research is to investigate how the role, qualifications and time of a career adviser is reflected in school
engagement, subject selection and post-school transition to employment or education.

9.3.1.2 Teachers and subject advice

Teachers were identified as primary subject advisers, confirming previous studies that identified that teachers are crucial to student learning biographies (Walther, do Amaral, Cuconato, & Dale, 2016). Teachers in this study gave informal advice to students individually and formally in groups, and in some cases the motives were related to self-interest. The findings of this research supports the conclusion reached by Alloway et al. (2004) which found that advice may be motivated by a genuine interest in a student’s future and success, or may be motivated by the needs of the adviser. In contrast, Walther et al. (2016, p. 251) stated that teachers as representatives of the school act in one way as gatekeepers, “thus making sure that their students’ educational trajectories comply with the existing social, economic and cultural order”.

Advice provided by teachers may be provided directly or indirectly (Polesel et al., 2004a). Direct advice relates to specific information about the merits of studying different subjects or pathways. In contrast, indirect advice occurs when a teacher’s attitude towards a subject or pathway influences student subject choice. The motives of teachers concerning subject advice were not always student-centred. Sometimes the advice was for the teacher’s own benefit. Motives for this behaviour included boosting subject numbers in order for their preferred teaching subject to gain enough student enrolments to run. It was also said to discourage disruptive students away from the teacher’s subject, and deter students whose academic abilities may reflect negatively on the cohort’s overall academic success. Consequently, teacher advice may be motivated by altruistic concerns about their teaching reputation for academic outcomes or to remove students who make teaching difficult (Dalley-Trim et al., 2008).

Greater VETiS participation and implementation rates occurred in CSS1 and CSS3, where the majority of staff viewed VETiS as suitable for all students. Teachers in these schools who were passionate about the value of VETiS subjects for all
students ‘championed’ VETiS by showcasing student success, skill development and by making the subjects ‘visible’ to all in the school community. In addition, VETiS teachers were more likely to be positive about VETiS for all students, regardless of academic ‘ability’, confirming previous research (Polesel et al., 2004b). This study found that some teachers of non-VETiS subjects were more positive about VETiS for non-academically successful students and saw it as a way of managing these students. This was more evident in the schools where VETiS participation rates were lower, CSS2 and CSS4. Further research to explore the extent to which this finding is applicable to other schools is desirable.

9.3.2 Nature of VETiS subject advice

This study concluded that specific negative VETiS advice was likely to be underpinned by the subject’s standing in the ATAR. Positive reasons may well be the particular interest that students have for the subject and post-school benefits. Notably, VETiS was the only subject where subject advice related to future job opportunities in these schools.

Unfortunately, advice aimed at deterring students from choosing VETiS was underpinned by the belief that VETiS subjects were designed for underachieving students and as a result those who enrolled in them would be less likely to aim for a high ATAR score. Students were often advised that VETiS subjects would not perform well in the ATAR score in schools where VETiS participation was low, CSS2 and CSS4. Indeed, consistent with research, most VETiS students elected to do the optional examination to keep their university options open (Crump & Stanley, 2005).

However, VETiS subjects used in ATAR contributions often ranked higher than many other subjects, which is consistent with findings from previous research. Students have been found to achieve higher marks in their VETiS courses in the HSC examination than other courses deemed more academic (Crump & Stanley, 2005). This phenomenon is consistent for both academic students and non-academic students, and was also confirmed in this research. This raises the question about whether those who gave subject advice were fully informed about VETiS courses in
relation to ATAR contributions. Further research in this area would benefit VETiS and improve participation rates.

9.3.3 Formality of information processes

Subject offerings within schools may be promoted or not promoted through information given or withheld. In this way information may be structured to suit the institutional context and ambitions of the school (Foskett et al., 2008). The present study built on Warton’s study by identifying that students receive individual advice about subjects and recommendations through school processes and through personal contact (Warton, 1997a). Subject advice, both formal and informal, occurred in different ways for different subjects in the schools within this study. Students in all Case Site Schools believed they were more likely to receive subject advice concerning English, Maths and Science than any other subjects.

Chapter 8 identified that students received information via formal and informal mechanisms when choosing subjects for the Higher School Certificate. Formal subject information dissemination occurred through structured information sessions, information handouts and interviews with career advisers and school personnel. Students also received informal subject suggestions and information based on the personal opinions of teachers, parents, other students, employers and friends. Subject selection information comes from a variety of sources, according to Alloway et al. (2004) and Whitely and Porter (1999). The following sections discuss the importance of formal and informal subject advice.

9.3.3.1 Importance of formal subject advice

Formal subject advice was structured advice planned for and delivered by school staff; it included strategies to provide information to the year group and to individual students. Students in the current research indicated the most highly valued formal advice was from interviews with school staff and career advisers (both with and without parents being present).
Formal interview processes required school to staff consider each student’s past education history and career plans. Therefore formal advice was tailored to meet the individual’s post-school pathway intentions and academic abilities. Some of those interviewed also said that these interviews were an opportunity for parents to gain a more realistic view of their child’s academic interests and career intent. This understanding is of importance to this research and emphasises that students, both those who undertake VETiS and those who do not, benefit from personalised advice when making subject choices.

Schools in this study which had higher participation rates in VETiS promoted VETiS for all students equally, not only to those with a preference for (or were deemed more suited to) practical-based learning. This was then reflected in the class student profile where a range of academic abilities were evident. It was also identified that VETiS subjects were further promoted when they were seen by other students as having a diverse group of students, with varying previous academic successes and interests.

This research noted a cyclic effect which occurred in VETiS subject selection participation. This was identified as a continuing situation that developed as one influence caused another influence that made the first influence either worse or better (Brewer, 2012). As depicted in Figure 9-1 the process finding is a ‘celebratory’ circle’ while Figure 9-2 is perhaps a ‘commiserative circle’. Figure 9-1 shows that in schools where VETiS was promoted, celebrated and encouraged to all students it gained a reputation as a valuable and worthwhile choice. However, Figure 9-2 demonstrates that the status, reputation and subsequent participation in VETiS was lower in schools when VETiS was promoted for students who were less likely to be successful in traditionally academic subjects.
Figure 9-1 Cycle of higher VETiS participation and retention

Figure 9-2 Cycle of lower VETiS participation and retention
9.3.3.2 Informal subject advice

Informal subject advice was unplanned advice originating from the adviser or when students requested feedback. This study reaffirmed research which concluded that informal subject advice usually originates from parents, individual teachers, friends and employers (Warton, 1997a). The present research identified that advice offered by employers usually concerned future employment opportunities and skills related to employment. This study also reaffirmed research which identified that parent expectation, desires or hopes for their child’s future was reflected in the advice offered by parents (Alloway et al., 2004; Cuconato & Walther, 2015).

School staff and students believed that parents were important influences on subject choice decisions. Parent expectation, desires and hopes for their child’s future are often reflect in the choices encouraged, which is consistent with the findings of previous research (Alloway et al., 2004; Cuconato & Walther, 2015; Walther et al., 2016).

Informal advice was an important dynamic that influenced students when they selected their subjects. The research explored if teachers and parents were likely to encourage students to prioritise any particular subjects, and if the reasons for choice differed between subjects. Indeed, students were more likely to be offered advice about English, maths and science. In contrast, few students received advice about VETiS subjects. The reasons to explain this phenomenon were unclear but may include the perceived lack of status of VETiS compared to the traditional academic-based subjects. Moreover, non-VETiS teacher advisers may have been ill-informed or naïve about the usefulness of VETiS for students.

Similarly, previous research has concluded that advice offered to students by their friends and peers was often based on personal motivations such as the desire to stay close to their friends (Warton, 1997a; Waters, McPherson, & Schubert, 2014; Whitely & Porter, 1999). While staff in this research agreed that this was valid, students denied this to be a persuading rationale. This inconsistency of opinions raises questions about the accuracy of teachers’ beliefs about their students’
motivations in selecting VETiS. Consequently, this study challenges Warton’s (1997a) research.

9.3.4 Conclusion

Students received formal and informal subject advice and valued both. An important consideration concerned the mode of delivery and the credibility of advice provided to students about VETiS subject choices. Formal advice processes were found to have the potential to be structured in such a way as to promote or discourage subject choices based on leadership focus. Informal advice was found to be a valuable experience in selecting subjects. However, not all such advice was useful or accurate since some advisers were not sufficiently trained to offer it. In addition, informal advice may have been motivated by the personal agendas of school personnel, who may have been more interested in capturing (or excluding) an audience for their own subjects than providing authentic advice.

9.4 Key findings informing Specific Research Question 3

The third Specific Research Question that focuses the conduct of this research is, how do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools? This question explored the influence of capacity, leadership beliefs and school culture on VETiS subject implementation decisions. Findings clustered around three themes: (a) school capacity; (b) beliefs of leaders; and (c) school culture.

9.4.1 School capacity to implement VETiS

School leaders must consider if the school has the capacity to implement VETiS subjects. This involves identifying which subjects will be implemented, resourced and supported. Principals also decided who was involved in decision-making, including which stakeholders. Not surprisingly, there were similarities and differences between the Case Site Schools in capacity to implement VETiS. These offer insights to explain why some schools implement more VETiS than others.
9.4.1.1 Subject implementation decision makers

A major difference between schools in subject decision-making involved the 'who'. Schools varied in the composition and number of school personnel involved in subject decisions.

Some schools had a large team inclusive of all KLA coordinators and some schools involved only the principal and one other staff member. Schools with shared decision-making processes including three or more school leadership personnel tended to have higher VETiS participation and implementation rates than those with two. The schools in this study that employed a shared leadership approach to subject decisions evidenced higher VETiS implementation and participation. This supports research by Chrispeels (2004) which identified that distributed school leadership allows individuals to share their expertise in ways that accomplish more than one individual can alone. Furthermore, her research concluded that distributed leadership by inclusion in committees that disburses leadership to teachers “fosters greater student–teacher collaboration around learning goals” (p. 3). Thus, shared leadership encourages a whole of school understanding about strategies that support individual student’s learning pathways (Jappinen, 2012). Additionally, shared leadership can help to address the complex challenges of meeting student needs in schooling (Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009).

Principals and school leadership staff had differing personal educational experiences and employment backgrounds. Previous experiences in education and employment may have influenced personal opinions about what ‘school education should be’. Subject implementation teams which included at least one member with prior experience in VETiS evidenced higher VETiS implementation rates; this is consistent with previous research (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2004). The school principal was found to influence the curriculum, a conclusion confirming previous research (Glatthorn, Jailall, & Jailall, 2017). Furthermore, findings from research undertaken by Hallinger (2005) identified that a principal’s knowledge of teaching and learning will lead them to set up structures, such as collaboration, with the aim of promoting a positive learning climate. Indeed, Leithwood et al.’s (2009) research found that there was a positive relationship
between organisational improvement and distributed leadership. However, prior research has emphasised the pivotal role which the principal plays in creating opportunities and conditions supportive of collaborative work (Jensen, 2012).

Principals decided who was to be included in subject implementation decisions in this study. Indeed, previous research has identified that the “most successful school leaders are those who are open minded and ready to learn from others” (Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 36). Subject decision-making processes in schools which involved a team of three or more members were more likely to support the implementation of VETiS and promote activities to encourage student participation. Subject decision-making teams which included experience in VETiS also tended to experience higher participation and implementation rates.

Successful implementation of VETiS in the case schools was reliant on the support of school leadership in promoting VETiS within the broader educational goals for the school and fostering a program that was developed locally in response to local conditions and needs. This conclusion is consistent with those of (Chiswell, Stafford, Stokes, & Holdsworth, 2001). Schools with the highest VETiS implementation and participation rates were those in which the following conditions were satisfied: subject implementation decisions were made by a team of three or more people, including the principal; teams were not biased towards a specific KLA or away from VETiS; and VETiS students were not characterised as having lesser academic ability. This finding supports Falk’s (2003) research, which noted that effective leadership in the implementation of VETiS is not the responsibility of a solitary leader.

Decisions made by school leadership influenced VETiS implementation and participation, a conclusion confirming previous research (Schneyder, 2002). VETiS in secondary schools was found to have a better chance of success and sustainability if supported with resourcing and the commitment of the school principal. Leadership decisions concerning curriculum change, curriculum management (timetabling), personnel management, strength of community partnerships and strategies for school promotion may either support or discourage VETiS.
9.4.1.2 Stakeholder influence on subject implementation

Successful implementation of VETiS relied on the support of school leadership through promotion of VETiS within the broader educational goals of the school and by fostering a program that was developed locally in response to local conditions and needs (Chiswell et al., 2001; Kilpatrick, Bell, & Kilpatrick, 2000). School leadership teams involved in subject decision-making considered the contributions of stakeholders in varying degrees. Stakeholders were identified as either internal (students and staff) or external (community and parents). This confirms previous research that identified that stakeholder influence in school decisions can be viewed by the principal as either supporting or inhibiting their own influence (Yongmei, Rui, & Pounder, 2017). Their study also found that principals perceive that school decisions were influenced by a range of stakeholders; however they also perceive themselves to have “the greatest influence in school decisions in almost all the decision areas” (p. 240).

Stakeholders affect or are affected by the school’s actions. Non-government schools, in order to remain viable, need to attract student enrolments. Parents act as advocates and select the school for their children, and also influence educational options, which confirms previous research (Horvat & Baugh, 2015). Therefore, parents and students are stakeholders. However, schools differ in the amount of feedback sought from them when making subject implementation decisions. Parents may have expectations on the subjects that their children should study. In contrast, students may have different expectations than those of their parents. The research conducted by Horvat and Baugh (2015) also found that not all parents have the expertise and knowledge to make informed educational decisions for their children.

This issue invites further elaboration. This research identified conflicting agendas operating when school leadership made decisions about the implementation of VETiS in their schools. Some school leadership considered first and foremost their ‘bottom line’ which was the school as a business; they made decisions with reference to the expectations of parents, because the parents choose the school their child will attend. This raises an issue worthy of further investigation: Are
parental expectations considered more than the needs of students when schools decide which subjects to offer?

Parents may choose to move their child to another school if subjects they expected to be offered to their children are not available. Competition for enrolment influences school leadership decisions about subject offering and resourcing, confirming findings by Klatt et al. (2016). Consequently, some schools in this research implemented specific VETiS courses because they feared that parents would transfer their children to other schools if they did not.

Interestingly, students were not identified by school leaders as stakeholders prior to subject implementation decisions. Students first demonstrated their interests in VETiS, when they chose specific VETiS subjects from a list of possibilities offered to them by the school leadership. This list was generated after the leadership considered multiple influences relating to capacity. These included the capabilities of existing staff, school resources and the history of student junior subject selections. Subjects which were popular with the current cohort in their junior level studies were considered for the type of subject those students may be interested in the senior studies. Consequently, most schools in general maintained the traditional curriculum, without consideration of student opinion, changing employment dynamics and student interests. The inclusion of VETiS in the curriculum in some schools may have been more about providing something for the non-academically inclined students than offering realistic alternatives to meet current student needs for relevance.

9.4.1.3 Resourcing issues

Availability of qualified staff to teach subjects was major consideration in subject implementation decisions. Schools had limited staffing and worked within the boundaries of staff qualifications and availability. VETiS teachers were required to have specific training and qualifications in the industry area as well as workplace training qualifications. To be eligible for this training, appointed teachers need to meet entry benchmarks. If they failed to do so, VETiS implementation was not possible. This contrasts with other high school subject areas where out of field
teaching was possible. Out of field teaching was not possible for VETiS due to the compliance requirements mandated by the national standards. These required VETiS subjects to be delivered and assessed by teachers who have the same industry qualification competencies as they are teaching and a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015). The standards also require teachers to maintain industry currency in the same occupational outcome of the vocational certificate they are delivering.

Schools that evidenced higher VETiS participation and implementation were led by principals who held a defensible vision for implementing VETiS. This conclusion confirms research by Schneyder (2002). Issues that underpin this vision included successful transition from school, addressing the needs of most students, provision of a breadth of experience in learning, increased enrolments/retention, challenging traditional beliefs of staff/parents and links between school and community.

9.4.1.4 Influences identified as enablers or barriers to subject implementation

There are enablers and barriers which influenced school leadership decisions about subject offerings. However, while some enablers/barriers were common to all subjects others were unique to VETiS. The common enabler for VETiS implementation was the passion and enthusiasm of school staff, specifically those in leadership, as well as VETiS teachers and VETiS coordinators. This passion for VETiS by staff had ramifications which nurtured a positive VETiS school culture. This is consistent with research by Harreveld (2015) who identified that schools in which leadership that advocates VETiS experience increased enrolments, and have staff who are engaged and willing to undertake professional learning with industry placements in order to maintain currency.

The consistent barrier in all schools was the compliance requirements of VETiS. These included paperwork, teacher training requirements and industry currency. Another barrier in all schools was the negative attitude towards VETiS displayed by non-VETiS staff.
9.4.2 School leadership beliefs

School culture and reputation are driven by the vision of school leadership and is shaped by public perceptions about the school. This dynamic explains why subject implementation decisions may be based more on enhancing the reputation of the school rather than on the needs or interests of the students. Therefore, the school’s reputation and culture influences leadership decision-making related to subject implementation; Watson’s (2002) research identified similar motivations occurring. Schools in this research which promoted a culture and reputation of providing relevant education for all students tended to have higher VETiS implementation and participation than those with a focus on academic performance.

9.4.2.1 Commitment to VETiS by leadership

Important influences which facilitated successful VETiS course development included formal commitment to VETiS by school leadership. This commitment was evidenced in the school’s objectives/goals, leadership support, system support, availability of resources and commitments to partnerships. Klatt et al. (2016) also found that the success of VETiS programs depended on the “vision and quality of school leadership” and acknowledged the demands which VETiS makes upon school leaders for teacher development, resources, community relationships and educational leadership.

A supportive and proactive principal was the primary influence on VETiS implementation, a conclusion generated by Polesel et al. (2004a). The influence of the principal can support processes which encourage VETiS implementation. These included time release for teachers in order to acknowledge heavy administration demands, a team of VETiS staff, a positive attitude regarding the role of VETiS in improving learning and a modern view of VETiS. These influences have also been identified by Klatt et al. (2016).

Leadership teams which included individuals with experience in VET either as parents or individuals experienced higher rates of participation and implementation of VETiS. Schools with higher rates of VETiS evidenced all KLAs in leadership
teams when making subject implementation decisions, including VETiS. Not surprisingly, schools which were led by teams which were positive about the worth of VETiS subjects and implemented strategies which made these subjects accessible exhibited high VETiS implementation and participation rates.

School leadership decisions influenced how VETiS (and other subjects) were presented to students and where they were situated within the school timetable. Timetabling processes were found to narrow or broaden VETiS subject choices depending on how and where VETiS was available. Schools that evidenced higher VETiS participation and implementation rates had timetables in which VETiS was available on multiple lines and allowed for a greater range of student subject choices. This conclusion was also reached by Ryan (2002), who identified that issues such as timetabling and negative streaming of lower academic performing students into VETiS impacted on the parity of esteem associated with VETiS and ultimately reflected the success of VETiS implementation. Schools where leadership promoted VETiS as suitable for all students, regardless of academic ability, experienced higher VETiS participation and implementation rates than those that promoted VETiS as suited to ‘non-academic’ students only. This assertion was confirmed by Clayton et al. (2010) who noted that student engagement was maximised when leadership provided a flexible timetable and extended class times for VETiS (Clayton et al., 2010).

Leadership which offered appropriate time release for VETiS teachers in acknowledgement of the extra work involved encouraged teacher willingness to deliver the subjects. This conclusion confirmed Klatt et al.’s (2016) research.

9.4.2.2 School leadership experience in VETiS

School leadership teams which include individuals with VETiS experience were more likely to support the value and complexity of these subjects. The principal of CSS3 had previous VETiS experience. This principal’s very positive attitudes to VETiS contributed to explaining why this school had the highest rate of VETiS implementation and participation.
9.4.3 School culture and implementation of VETiS

School leadership’s vision for the reputation and culture of the school had the potential to value or undervalue VETiS. The values that underpinned VETiS implementation in schools may have been consistent with the desired school reputation promoted by leadership, or they may not. Porter (2006) identified a similar phenomenon.

9.4.3.1 Principals and school culture

School culture refers to the ethos, rituals, patterns of discourse, use of symbols, values and general assumptions about the purpose of the organisation (Ashkanasy et al., 2011; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Whetten, 2006). Culture reflects the history, tradition and reputation of the school (Gruenet & Whitaker, 2015; Solvason, 2005). This research identified that principals who primarily promoted an academic school culture and reputation were less likely to offer large number of opportunities to study VETiS subjects, and were more likely to encourage specific student groups into VETiS subjects.

Previous research by Bronfenbrenner (1994, 2005) highlighted that culture, systems and environment influence the decisions that individuals and organisations make. This study found that his term of microsystem consisting of the individuals, environment, community and religious nature of the schools was influential in the development of school cultures. The exosystem involving economic systems, laws, industry and educational systems may have also influenced the culture of schools. CSS3 staff acknowledged the importance of government policy, the Catholic nature of the school and the principles of equity in choice. Government policy backed by initiatives such as Trade Training Centre funding assisted in the implementation of VETiS and encouraged leadership support of these subjects in CSS2.

Principals, such as the leader in CSS3, who planned for an ‘inclusive’ and balanced school culture and reputation, tended to offer a greater range of VETiS opportunities promoted to all students. ‘Inclusive’ in this context is interpreted as the valuing of all students equally and providing a diversity of opportunities with equal access to all
Balance inclusive of VETiS considered the types of subjects that would suit the needs of students with consideration to gender, academic abilities and post-school pathways. However, school enrolments were enhanced if the school offered a variety of subjects including VETiS, as well as practical transition pathways post-school. Competition for enrolments among schools influenced the decisions of principals about the education direction of the school and subject planning regarding VETiS.

9.4.3.2 VETiS and school culture

Leaders in schools that experienced higher VETiS participation rates identified that these subjects reflect the school’s reputation and culture. The reputation promoted by school leadership affected the culture and ultimately influenced the values placed on VETiS by students, parents and staff. Indeed, previous research identified that VETiS may present a philosophical challenge to teachers in relation to the culture and identity of school education (Dalton & Smith, 2004). This policy adoption also influenced subject choices made by students.

School cultures that perceived VETiS as a subject suited to students with lower academic ability tended to promote VETiS primarily to students who were seen as not ‘academic’. In contrast, when school cultures promoted VETiS as beneficial for all students, children from all backgrounds enrolled in them. This phenomenon generated a cyclic effect where both the skills and academic merits of VETiS were valued and celebrated. Consequently, evidence of high ATAR contributions continued to promote VETiS as beneficial to all students. Previous research identified that the traditional culture of a school influenced support for VETiS (Porter, 2006), and had the potential to contribute to the undervaluing of these subjects by school leaders and to reinforce parent preferences for their children to have a post-school university pathway.

School reputations and cultures that promoted different kinds of success in learning tended to have higher than average participation and implementation rates in VETiS. School leadership that celebrated the achievement of VETiS certificates as well as
ATAR achievement promoted a culture that included multiple pathways for students to succeed at school.

9.4.3.3 School culture and student subject choice

Schools have distinctive reputations and cultures that influence subject decision-making by students. Previous research, such as that by Foskett et al. (2008), found that characteristics of schools may promote, or not, an individual's aspirations for further education. Indeed, schools which emphasised academic pathways and examinations were able to exert influence over parent and student ambitions and views.

The school's ethos, culture and members of the school community influenced student choices and preferences. Foskett et.al. (2008) identified similar phenomena. Subject coordinators and teachers knowingly or unknowingly encouraged a range of cultural perspectives, values and career aspirations which influenced public perception of VETiS.

A specific characteristic identified which led to schools experiencing greater rates of VETiS implementation and participation was the commitment of school leadership to providing a balanced curriculum. This was evidenced by schools which offered a range of subject choices on each timetable line. The ethos of a Catholic school was characterised by its promotion of VETiS, because this demonstrated a philosophy of inclusion, stewardship, pastoral care and concern for developing students’ skills for successful transition to post-school life (Tony, TFG3, 14/11/2012).

9.4.4 Conclusion

In schools in which the principals promoted a culture which valued VETiS, greater implementation and participation in these subjects was exhibited. The principal's support led a whole-of-school commitment to these subjects, and this resulted in the equal status of these subjects within the school.
9.5 Synthesis of key findings

Influences which motivate student and school leadership decision-making regarding selection and offering of VETiS courses in Catholic secondary schools are affected by the complex dynamics and management of schools.

In order to understand why there are variations in the participation and implementation of VETiS subjects, three Specific Research Questions focused the conduct of this research:

1. What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?
2. What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?
3. How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?

Figure 9-3 demonstrates the relationship between the research purpose, specific questions and the themes which were generated from the analysis of data.

Figure 9-4 offers a graphic organiser that synthesises key findings that address the Main Research Question: What influences student and school leadership decision-making regarding selection and offering of VETiS courses in Catholic secondary schools?

This research concluded that the following elements contributed to implementation and participation rates in the case schools:

- Influences on student/parent decision-making;
- Credibility of advice given to students;
- School capacity to implement VETiS;
- School leadership beliefs; and
- School reputation and culture.
Figure 9-3 Relationship between research purpose, questions, themes and the Bronfenbrenner model (Hchokr, 2019)
These influences are important. Figure 9-4 outlines the characteristics of these influences which impact on VETiS participation and implementation which were identified through reflection of the Bronfenbrenner model of ecological development discussed in Chapter 2. Schools which evidenced higher levels of each of the influences were likely to have higher participation and implementation in VETiS than those schools with a combination of fewer of these.
Figure 9-4 Synthesis of key findings, participation and implementation of VETiS

- **School Reputation and Culture**
  - Promotes a balanced education for all
  - Meets with a Catholic ethos of education that promote inclusion, stewardship, caring and developing students for post school life
  - Aims at a range of measures for educational success not only academic
  - Accesses or provides resourcing for VETiS

- **School leadership’s beliefs concerning the implementation of VETiS subjects**
  - Three or more in the decision team
  - Welcomes the input of stakeholders
  - Not biased towards any KLA areas or student “type”
  - Focus on providing balance in the curriculum
  - Provide for a flexible timetable that allows multiple opportunities
  - Believe VETiS is suitable for all students
  - Supports VETiS with appropriate resourcing
  - Leadership includes personnel with experience in VETiS
  - VETiS is considered a KLA with coordinator points given to VETiS for a designated VET coordinator
  - The extra workload for teachers is recognised by leadership

- **School capacities**
  - Passionate and qualified VETiS teachers
  - Teachers who are willing to do the extra work involved in VETiS
  - Both VETiS and non-VETiS teachers/staff are positive about the benefits and quality of VETiS subjects
  - Provide appropriate resourcing to support VETiS
  - Value a range of ways to describe learning success

- **Credibility of advice**
  - A range of subject advisers
  - Relates to the benefits i.e. relevance post school and pathways to employment and education
  - Promotes VETiS as a quality subject with equal status as other subject areas
  - Advice that is student centred
  - Personalised career counselling by qualified staff

- **Influences underpinning subject choices**
  - Students who enjoy practical subjects
  - Interest in the industry area
  - Students preparing for post school life with additional qualifications and employability skills
  - Students who embrace the range of post school benefits including ATAR, potential and career aspects
  - Students who value the multiple pathways from VETiS

**Participation in and Implementation of VETiS**
9.6 Conclusion

This research explored the reasons for variation among four schools in the implementation of and participation in VETiS. Leaders who promoted a culture inclusive of VETiS recognised the diversity of student needs and post-school pathways. Australian legislation obliges school attendance for children until the age of 17 years. Moreover, students who complete the final two years of secondary education are more likely to be successful in post-school education and employment. However, approximately 70% of Australian HSC students living in regional and remote areas do not transition to university (Singhal, 2017). Consequently, it is educationally sound and just that schools offer a curriculum that recognises this reality.

The inclusion of VETiS in the curriculum broadens student learning beyond the traditional academic focus (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2004). The present research found that school leaders who promoted VETiS as beneficial to all learners recognised the quality learning these subjects offer. Indeed, a curriculum which included a wide variety of options and embraced the needs of all students addressed the definition of what it means to be ‘Catholic’ in schooling (Congregation of Catholic Education, 2013).

School leaders were powerful influences in generating a school’s reputation and culture. Moreover, the reputation and culture of the school influenced the view the school community had about VETiS subjects. The beliefs of leadership concerning the school’s reputation, educational success and subject advice could either support or impede VETiS implementation and participation.

The influences that contributed to VETiS implementation and participation (Figure 9-4) were the culture and reputation of the school informed by leadership beliefs, with consideration given to the school’s capacity to offer VETiS, credibility of advice and subject choices. In the context of this research specific characteristics were identified as influencing subject delivery and enrolments in schools. Schools which evidenced more of these characteristics were likely to have higher participation and broader VETiS subject choices than schools that had fewer of these characteristics.
CHAPTER 10: Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of this chapter is to present conclusions and recommendations generated from the research documented in this thesis. The chapter begins with a restatement of the purpose of the study and a brief overview of the methodology. The major findings (Section 10.2) and contribution of the study to new knowledge (Section 10.3), along with any limitations of the study (Section 10.4), are subsequently discussed. Central to the focus of a professional doctorate, Section 10.5 draws implications for practice and Section 10.6 concludes with recommendations.

10.1 Purpose of the study

This research explored student and school leadership decision-making regarding selection and offering of VETiS courses in Catholic secondary schools. The research problem (Chapter 1) stated that, despite the importance placed on VETiS by national educational bodies, there appeared to be a lack of consistency in the participation and offering of these courses in rural systemic Catholic secondary schools in NSW. There was also a lack of information explaining this phenomenon. This research explored the possible reasons that may have affected participation. This was explored from two perspectives; the implementation of VETiS programs, and participation by students in VETiS subjects. The research considered the contributing influences on school leadership decision-making processes which reflect the number and type of VETiS courses offered to students.

The methodological approach employed was case study under an interpretivist philosophical approach. The case was bounded within rural systemic schools drawn from two Catholic dioceses in NSW. The case involved four Case School Sites, which were considered individually and comparatively to explore reasons for variation in participation and implementation of VETiS. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at each site with four key staff members, the principal, curriculum coordinator, career adviser and VETiS coordinator. Focus group interviews were also conducted at each site with VETiS teachers. Large-sample surveys were conducted with Year 11 students at each site. Parents were also offered the
opportunity to provide their opinions using a survey. Relevant school documents were analysed and field notes were also recorded for each school site.

10.2 Main findings

The study was framed around three Specific Research Questions. The findings related to each of these is briefly summarised in the following subsections. Data were collected during the years 2012 and 2013.

10.2.1 Specific Research Question 1

The first Specific Research Question is:

What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subject?

Four responses are proposed which contribute to answering this question.

The first response is the potential for turnover of school leadership in key roles such as principal, curriculum coordinator, career adviser and VETiS coordinator to influence the uptake and/or implementation of VETiS. The attitudes, beliefs and commitment to VETiS of the individuals in these roles may sway the organisational culture, allocation of resources and status of VETiS within the school. Fluctuation in VETiS participation and implementation appeared to be greater in schools where there was evidence of turnover in leadership, particularly in the roles of principal and VETiS coordinator. The findings also identified that fluctuation was influenced by school leadership in both areas, the participation by students and implementation of VETiS.

Student participation may be influenced by the leader’s decisions or beliefs regarding marketing and access to VETiS. In addition, leadership processes which recognise the successes of subject achievements could reflect the status of VETiS within the school as a subject of choice. Leadership decisions regarding the school timetable has the potential to steer students into, or out of, subjects. Timetables that were seen to enable VETiS were those which provided multiple opportunities to select VETiS on a variety of timetable lines. Timetables which discouraged VETiS placed
all VETiS subjects on one line, resulting in one opportunity only. This type of timetable often resulted in a VETiS subject being removed from choice due to insufficient numbers as students had only one opportunity to choose between them. Timetable decisions which did not allow extended lesson time or double lessons also discouraged some students from VETiS choice. The lack of extended lessons otherwise necessitated that students attend school outside of regular hours in order to complete the practical projects which were to be completed in ‘realistic to industry’ timeframes, in line with training package compliance specifications.

The implementation of VETiS required support from school leadership in the provision of industry-standard equipment and appropriate facilities in compliance with training package specifications. Furthermore, leadership commitment to VETiS teacher training, the compliance workload and requirement for industry currency may influence leadership decisions to implement these subjects. Moreover, industry-standard facilities, realistic workplace projects and enthusiastic teachers further promoted VETiS to students as interesting and relevant.

The second response is that students access a variety of advisers when making subject choices, although parents are a primary adviser according to data collected in interviews, focus groups and student surveys. Parents were identified by key staff as significant stakeholders in their child’s education, and expected to receive value for money for the fees they paid for their child to attend a non-government school. Parent advice was said by those interviewed to reflect the expectations they have for their child’s post-school education or employment pathway. However, concerns were raised by school staff that parent expectations may not be consistent with the academic ability or career interest of their child. School staff also believed that traditional subjects were generally more valued by parents, possibly due to their own experiences of secondary education. Students valued school processes which involved structured personal advice from school staff, especially with career advisers. However, school commitment to the resourcing of the position of career adviser varied.

Quality personal advice from a career adviser was believed to provide an important link between the parent and student process of career planning according to interview responses. Personal discussions between the career adviser and
parent/student provided the opportunity for a knowledgeable third person to explore pertinent questions, and to offer various options and pathways to career interests. It was also an opportunity for the student and parent to voice opinions and intentions about career intentions. However, this forum at times brought to the surface the dissonance between parent expectations and student career ambitions.

The **third response** is that there is a range of reasons that underpin student VETiS subject choices. Level of interest, the teacher, and the ability of the student were found to influence student subject choice in all subjects including VETiS. However, in all schools the capacity to provide skills and qualifications for post-school employment was more influential in VETiS subject choice than in choice of traditional subjects. One difference among schools with higher or lower participation was the perceived value of VETiS subject contribution towards an ATAR score. In schools with higher participation, students indicated that they chose VETiS because it would benefit their ATAR; this was not the case in schools with lower participation. These conflicting perceptions are of concern as VETiS teachers believed that students who were enrolled in VETiS subjects generally performed better in the VETiS subject than in the other subjects they studied; as a result the VETiS subject has the potential to be a leading ATAR contributor. The different perceptions of students about the academic capacity of VETiS subjects may reflect the status of VETiS in the school and the students who chose VETiS.

The **fourth response** is that stereotyping students as being less academically inclined may result in a negative stigma about VETiS subjects. Peers were said to be influential in subject choice decisions; a perception by peers about these subjects being a soft option may deter some students. Students often position themselves among their peers and friends and this positioning impacts on subject selection and career aspirations, this confirms research undertaken by Brooks (2003). Schools which promote VETiS as suitable to students who are less academic may knowingly, or unknowingly, lower the status of these subjects among students. Students who see themselves as academically able may decide not to choose VETiS because of the type of students they believe will be in the classes. In contrast, in schools which have high VETiS participation and implementation rates, VETiS was seen to be respected and as valued in importance as other subjects in the curriculum by the school community. The broader academic mix in VETiS subjects evidenced in these
schools was seen to generate confidence with students and parents that these subjects are suitable and beneficial for all students.

10.2.2 Specific Research Question 2

The second Specific Research Question is:

*What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?*

Four responses are proposed which contribute to answering this question.

The **first response** is that school leadership implements formal processes to provide students and parents with information about subject choice in Stage 6. The common processes used to disseminate subject information were information evenings and subject selection handbooks. Some schools mandated a compulsory interview with school staff for parents and students; interestingly these schools evidenced declining VETiS participation rates. Indeed, school leadership intentions for the educational reputation and culture of the school may be reflected in subject selection processes. VETiS is considered relatively new to secondary education and as such not perceived as a traditional subject. This raises a concern about those who are disseminating the information about VETiS subjects and their personal beliefs, experiences (or lack of) or understandings about VETiS. In addition, subjects were found to be promoted, or not, through information given, withheld or how it was situated in subject information dissemination processes. Successful implementation and participation in VETiS relies on the support of school leadership in the equitable promotion of VETiS among all subjects.

The **second response** is that advice to study VETiS was generally motivated by the interests and needs of the students, however not always. Advice to study VETiS subjects related to the subjects’ benefits in relation to post-school employment opportunities; this was more evident in these subjects than traditional subjects. The qualifications and employment-related skills were identified as being relevant and useful. In schools where VETiS participation was lower, however, the advice related to the subject being easier and that the student would be more successful in this type of course. There was concern that some teacher advisers may have had altruistic
motivations in advising less academically able students, or those perceived to be disruptive, into VETiS subjects, and out of the subjects which they taught. This type of advice was found to contribute to the negative status of VETiS and a negative perception of the type of student who chooses these subjects.

The **third response** is that some students were advised not to study VETiS due to the perception that these subjects were not for ‘smart’ students. This type of advice together with advice that the subject may be detrimental to an ATAR score was generally aimed at students who had a positive academic history. Interestingly, VETiS teachers did not provide this advice, and could readily provide evidence where students had used VETiS positively in their ATAR scores. This contrasting information may contribute to a negative status of VETiS within the school. It may also deter students who may otherwise have been interested as they do not wish to be seen as ‘the type of student who should do VETiS’.

The **fourth response** is that VETiS implementation and participation is higher in schools where VETiS is respected by all staff for being as valuable and important as other subjects in the syllabus. In schools with higher VETiS participation and implementation the school culture demonstrated a whole-of-school commitment to VETiS where both VETiS and non-VETiS teachers promoted VETiS to all students based on the benefits of these courses.

10.2.3 Specific Research Question 3

The third Specific Research Question is:

*How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in Schools?*

Five responses are proposed which contribute to answering this question.

The **first response** is that schools where VETiS implementation was higher have subject implementation teams of more than two people. Principals were found to have the ability to influence subject implementation decisions by selecting those who make the decisions. Similarly, principals may also choose to increase the decision-making team and broaden the diversity of opinions offered. Representatives from all
KLA areas may offer different opinions that generate informed decision-making concerning VETiS resourcing and its implementation.

The second response is that school leadership make subject decisions based on stakeholder expectations. Students have previously been identified as stakeholders. However, parents were identified as the primary stakeholders as they choose which schools their child attends. Catholic schools invite fee-paying enrolments, and as such the parent is perceived as the ‘customer’. School leaders promote school reputations and cultures which are marketed to parents as meeting the needs of their child. However, the ambitions of the child may at times differ to the expectations of the parent for their child.

The third response is that, like all schools, Catholic schools are businesses. These schools need to attract enrolments to remain viable. Some subject decisions were found to relate to the targeted future enrolments of the school. Consequently, it was found that a school leadership that promotes a reputation for high academic outcomes will target students with higher academic achievements for their academic courses. Similarly, parents who have academic ambitions for their child are attracted to these schools. Therefore, schools which target high academic outcomes are likely to have fewer VETiS subjects implemented. Competition for enrolments between schools influences a principal’s decisions about the education direction of the school and subject planning regarding VETiS.

The fourth response is that resourcing—in the form of appropriate staff, facilities and equipment—influences VETiS implementation. Human resourcing issues, such as access to qualified staff, influence subject implementation decisions. School leadership may support resourcing by allocating school funding to initial and ongoing training of VETiS staff. Similarly, physical resources such as facilities and equipment influence subject implementation and school budgets. Resourcing requirements for VETiS subjects are more complex than in other subject areas because of regulatory requirements for delivering nationally-accredited training.

The fifth response is that the school's reputation and culture may promote or deter VETiS implementation or participation. Principals who plan for a ‘balanced’ school
culture and reputation tend to offer a greater range of VETiS opportunities for all students.

10.2.3.1 Model for effective implementation of VETiS

Figure 10-1 demonstrates the connecting influences that provide a school environment where VETiS is enthusiastically implemented. The strategic nurturing of VETiS is a responsibility of leadership. The relevance and opportunities VETiS offers make it a valuable contributor to a student’s final two years of schooling. VETiS not only addresses the needs of a diverse student group, but it also provides real qualifications for future employment and assists transition from school with employability skills. Therefore, in order for school leaders to increase implementation and participation rates of VETiS they need to promote a school culture where VETiS is seen as a positive and worthwhile subject area. Figure 10-1 diagrammatically presents the influences leading to high VETiS implementation and participation.

Figure 10-1 Influences leading to high VETiS implementation and participation

10.3 Contribution to new knowledge

This research has made a contribution to the body of knowledge in the area of Vocational Education and Training in Schools. By exploring the issues of subject selection and subject implementation as they relates to VETiS as compared to other
subjects the study has extended the work of previous research. Previous research in VETiS was mostly undertaken by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research or originated from overseas studies. Chapter 1 identified that there was a lacuna of scholarly research surrounding choice of VETiS as a subject by secondary school students in Australia and the influences accounting for these choices.

The synthesis of key finding regarding implementation of and participation in VETiS was developed from the research to explain the differences between schools in relation to VETiS provision. The research explored the issues of subject selection and subject implementation for all students (VETiS and non-VETiS), then compared findings from each school as case studies to identify what potentially causes variance between schools. The synthesis graphic outlined that student motivation, credibility of advice, school capacities, school leadership’s beliefs and school reputation and culture are considerations in relation to VETiS. The graphic also identified characteristics of these aspects which have the potential to influence participation and implementation of these subjects.

10.4 Limitations of the research

This research was conducted within a case bounded by rural NSW systemic Catholic schools. Rich, in-depth information was ensured by data gathering across participant groups relevant to the case (Patten, 1990). Multiple sites enabled data to reflect the uniqueness of each site yet generate defensible understandings of the whole case.

No claims are made that the findings are representative of all schools in that diocese or beyond. However, transferability to other groups or contexts is ensured by readers who engage with this research and are able to appreciate its applicability to other contexts (Stake, 1995).

It is acknowledged that it is dangerous to draw general conclusions from a small number of cases (Hammersley, Foster, & Gomm, 2000). However, a counter view is that case studies can be used for naturalistic generalisation and transferability. The argument put forward by Gomm et al. (2000) is that readers of case study reports must themselves determine whether the findings are applicable to cases other than those included in this research. Therefore the burden of proof is on the user rather
than the original researcher; although the latter is responsible for providing a
description of the cases studied that is sufficiently ‘thick’ to allow users to assess the
degree of similarity between the cases investigated and those to which the findings
are to be applied (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 241).

It is acknowledged that there are limitations in the use of on-line surveys in research.
Respondents may answer questions incorrectly, with lack of consideration or
understanding, or skip questions (Debois, 2016). However, these concerns are
addressed by the presence of a teacher as a support during the conduct of the
survey and a feature in the software enforcing a required response.

It is acknowledged that this study is relation to participation and implementation of
VETiS in general and is not a gender study. The data has been collected holistically
and differentiation between genders has not been discussed.

The value of this research is its authenticity because it aims to communicate the
participants’ lived experiences through their own words (Bodgett, Boyer, & Turk,
2005). It may be limited by bias and interpretation of data by the researcher.
However, this concern is addressed by the rigorous application of trustworthiness
strategies such as triangulation, member checking (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, &
Walter, 2016), professional integrity and debriefing with supervisors.

10.5 Implications for VETiS

The understandings from the present research have implications for Vocational
Education and Training in rural NSW systemic Catholic schools, particularly with
regard to the implementation of and participation in VETiS subjects. The findings
also identified influences which may either promote or discourage VETiS
implementation or participation.

10.6 Recommendations

Recommendations follow which address areas for further research, policy and
practice that are grounded in the findings of this study.
### 10.6.1 Recommendations for further research

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<th>Recommendation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendation 1</strong></td>
<td>To investigate the impact of career adviser qualifications and time allocation on student subject selection support and the influence this has on post-school transition to student career goals.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 2</strong></td>
<td>To explore how schools appreciate student voices in relation to interest, post-school destinations and learning preferences when implementing new HSC subjects.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 3</strong></td>
<td>To undertake research on the contribution of VETiS subjects as a result of the HSC examination on a student’s ATAR compared to other subjects.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 4</strong></td>
<td>To undertake longitudinal studies of students, categorising those who have studied VETiS and those who have not, to investigate education and employment trends post-school over an extended period.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 5</strong></td>
<td>To explore the concept of subject status and its applicability to VETiS.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 6</strong></td>
<td>Explore the differences in understandings for subject choice reasons between students, teachers and leadership.</td>
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### 10.6.2 Recommendation for policy and practice

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<th>Recommendation</th>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 7</strong></td>
<td>That the NSW Education Standards Authority and the University Admissions Centre reconsider the current categorisation of VETiS courses as Category B and allowing only one to be considered within an ATAR score.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 8</strong></td>
<td>That systemic Catholic schools support a consistent implementation of VETiS across schools through policy that includes paid coordination points for VETiS and time allowance for teachers to account for the additional workload in delivering VETiS.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendation 9</strong></td>
<td>That systemic Catholic schools promote consistent and quality career advice services in schools through policies.</td>
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that includes time allowance, a common duty statement and required qualifications.

10.7 Concluding remarks

The challenge to governments that have supported the implementation of VETiS through policy and funding, is to continue to develop schooling practices that promote VETiS as a quality subject suited to a range of students. This same challenge applies to school systems and leadership to support the education agenda through policy and funding. In this way consistent conditions within schools may be promoted to recognise the additional requirements and work involved in subjects with dual accreditations. VETiS needs to be further supported with improved systems supporting the parity of esteem of these subjects in order to establish consistent views on this type of subject by parents, students and school leadership.
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Appendix A: Generation of data

Research Phase 1—Pre-Data Collection (Survey and Interview Construction)

Phase 1, prior to data collection, was designed to develop and trial questions and survey items. Phase 1 involved participants from three schools; these were categorised as pilot schools and were not part of phase 2. Interviews occurred with the principal, curriculum coordinator, career adviser and VETiS coordinator at each pilot school. Additionally, focus groups with VETiS teachers were conducted. Five sets of parent and child were interviewed. The information gathered assisted in the development of the survey instruments (Appendix C) and interview questions (Appendix E, F & G).

Research Phase 2—Exploratory (Survey Administration and Data Collection)

Research phase 2 incorporated interviews with school and diocese personnel, surveys of parents and students, and a review of subject information documents.

Specific Research Questions and Data Collection

Interviews, document analysis and surveys were used to gather data in response to the Main Research Question and Specific Research Questions. Data Collection Strategy and Questions are provided below. The streaming feature of SurveyMonkey was used which resulted in students only being required to answer questions on the six subjects they chose for the HSC; this resulted in the survey only taking between 15-20 minutes to complete. Students were asked which subjects they chose, and then for each subject chosen (including VET as below) were asked:

Specific Research Question 1: What influences underpin student/parent decision-making on choice of VETiS subjects?

Student Survey (SS):

1. Questions Q1–149:
   a. How important were the following when you chose THIS subject? (the list of reasons were gained through the pilot stage of this research from interviews with school personnel, parents and students):
i. Genuine interest; Good at subject; Good for my ATAR; Pre-requisite for future study; Useful to my future career; Skills for personal life; Looks good on my HSC; Good for my resume; My friends are in this class; I like the teacher; Only suitable subject on this line; Easier than other subjects on this line; It might help me get a job; I have studied this subject before and enjoyed it.

b. Did anyone give you advice on whether to study this course?
   i. Who gave you advice?
   ii. What was the advice?

2. Q150–153—Were you advised NOT to do any subjects as part of the HSC?
   a. Which subjects advised NOT to study?
   b. Who advised you not to study them?
   c. Reason for advising not to study that subject.

3. Q154—Please rank the following factors in order of importance to you for continuing on to Year 11 (the factors given were identified through the pilot phase of this research from school personnel, parents and students):
   a. HCS certificate; ATAR; Being with friends; Completing Year 12; I have to stay till I am 17; My parents want me to stay; Playing sport, music; To be a school leader; School activities; To gain skills that would make me more employable after school.

4. Q157—Post-school intentions.

5. Q158—What career are you interested in?

6. Q159—Do you intend staying at school till the end of Year 12?

7. Q160—What do your parents want you to do after school?

8. Q162—What do you think HSC subjects ‘should be’ for students?

9. Q163—Please rate the following ways of gaining information about subjects in order of usefulness when you made subject selection decisions (the strategies were identified during both the pilot phase and phase 2 of the research from interviews with school personnel):
   a. Year 10 subject information sessions with parents; Year 10 subject information sessions without parents; Individual interviews with school staff and parents; Individual interviews without parents; Individual interviews with career adviser without parents; Individual interviews with career adviser with parents; Current students doing the subject presentations; Presentations about each subject; Information sessions conducted by the career adviser; School subject information handbook or information sheets.

Parent Survey (PS)
1. Q2—Does your child intend completing Year 12?
2. Q3—What type of career path is your child considering?
3. Q4—Please complete this statement—I believe HSC subjects should be ....
4. Q5—What subjects would you recommend your child to study and why?
5. Q6–7—Are there any subjects you would NOT recommend for your child? Which ones and why?
6. Q11—What information did you find most helpful to you, please rank (the information strategies were identified in the pilot phase of this research from school personnel and parent interviews):
a. Subject selection handbooks; Information nights; Interviews with career adviser; Information from employers; Information from universities; Information from TAFE; Subject showcase and demonstration; Discussions with teachers; Discussions with parents of students who had already completed HSC; Individual interviews with school personnel for the purpose of subject guidance.

7. Q12—What further information or support could be given to help you advise your child?
8. Q13—What would you like your child to get from undertaking the HSC?
9. Q15—What do you believe students should learn during their HSC
10. Q18—What is your opinion on VET courses as a subject offered in the HSC?

**Specific Research Question 2**: What information is provided to inform student/parent decision-making regarding choosing VETiS subjects?

**Student Survey (SS)**
1. Q64–69—Did you choose a VET subject—studied at school within the scheduled timetable? If yes, the questions asked above were asked for each VET subject Q70–Q149, streamed only answering VET courses chosen; if no, the following questions were asked:
   a. Why didn’t you choose a VET subject?
   b. Did anyone advise you to study a VET subject, but you chose not to?
      i. Who advised you to do a VET subject?
      ii. What was the reason they advised you to do a VET subject?
   c. Did anyone advise you NOT to do a VET subject?
      i. Who advised you NOT to do a VET subject?
      ii. What was the reason they advised you NOT to do a VET subject?

**Parent Survey (PS)**
1. Q8—Whose role is it to advise students on subject selection for HSC?
2. Q9—Who should not provide advice on subject selection?
3. Q10—Please rate how confident you feel about providing subject selection advice?
School Personnel Interviews (SI)
1. Q3—How do students get advice, who, why, what, which subjects given specific advice, why?
2. Q4–5—Who else in school or externally advises students, informal/formal, type, why, what?
3. Q7—Which students are advised to/NOT to study VET courses, why, who, what, which students enrol in VET, why?

Focus Group (FG)
1. Q9—Who gives advice to students in relation to subject choices?

System Interview (DI)
1. Who advises students in relation to subject choices?

Document analysis—considering the amount, type and content of written information given to students in relation to VETiS, comparison between schools.

Specific Research Question 3: How do educational leaders implement VETiS programs in schools?

School Personnel Interviews (SI) and Focus Group FG)
1. Q11—How does the school decide on which subjects to offer in Year 11, who, what informs, how decision made?
2. Q12—Why does this school offer VET, who made decision, why?
3. Q13—How do decisions made relating to VET subjects differ from other subjects, who, what influences new, or current not continuing?
4. Q14—How does school make decisions on which subjects will “run”, who, rules, is this similar for VET?
5. Q15—How are timetable lines allocated, does this impact on subject selection?
6. Q16—What is school process for alternative VET pathways, TVET, advisers, issues, impact on subject selection and implementation?
7. Q17—How is VET managed within the school, coordination role, time allocation, selection process, coordinator advisory role, coordinator involvement in subject decision-making process?
8. Q18—How is career advice given in the school, role, selection process, time allocation, subject advice involvement, involvement with subject implementation?
9. Q20—Each interviewee/focus group was asked to reflect on the data trends for their school in relation to VETiS delivery and participation, and asked to reflect on why there may have been increases or decreases in VETiS.

System Interviews (DI)
1. Q4—How do schools make decisions on which courses to offer in relation to VETiS?
2. Q5—What do you believe are the barriers to VETiS subjects being implemented in the schools?
3. Q6—Who are the key stakeholders when schools are deciding to offer subjects?
4. Q7—Why do you believe there are differences between schools in the implementation of and participation in VETiS?
Appendix B: Student survey

This research tool involved piping and streaming logic so that students were only asked about subjects that they indicated they had selected. All subjects had the same questions asked. Therefore a sample is given; all other questions are included.

(This repeated for every subject area using logic, students only answered for the subjects they chose)
**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) delivered at the school**

*64. Did you choose a VET subject - studied at school within the scheduled timetable?*
- Yes
- No
- What is a VET subject?

**Reason for NOT choosing a VET Subject**

*65. Why didn’t you choose a VET subject*

*66. Did anyone advise you NOT to do a VET course*
- Yes
- No

**VET Advice 2**

*67. Who advised you NOT to study a VET subject?*

*68. What was the reason they advised you NOT to do a VET subject?*

*69. Did anyone advise you TO study a VET subject, but you chose not to?*
- Yes
- No

**VET Advice 3**

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**Yr 11 Subject Selection Research**

*70. Who advised you TO study a VET subject?*

*71. What was the reason they advised you TO choose a VET subject?*

**VET Delivered at TAFE or other provider (not part of a traineeship or appr...**

*72. Did you study a TVET subject or a VET subject with another provider?*
- Yes
- No

**SCHOOL BASED APPRENTICESHIP OR TRAINEESHIP**

*73. Did you undertake a school based apprenticeship or traineeship?*
- Yes
- No

**Which VET Course**

*74. Why did you choose to study a VET subject?*

*75. Which VET subject did you choose? (you will have the opportunity later to include another VET course if you have done more than one, just choose the first one at this stage)*
- Business Services
- Construction
- Entertainment
- Hospitality
- Information Technology
- Natural & Engineering
- Primary Industries
- Retail
### Yr 11 Subject Selection Research

#### 84. How important were the following when you chose THIS subject?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>A Little Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am genuinely interested in this subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am good at this subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for my ATAR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-requisite for future study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful to my future career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills for personal life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks good on my HSC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for my resume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends are in this class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only suitable subject on this line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier than other subjects on this line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If might help me get a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have studied this subject before and really enjoyed it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This subject has a reputation in this school for achieving high results.

#### 85. Did anyone give you advice on whether to study this subject?

- Yes
- No

### BUSINESS SERVICES Subject Advice

#### 86. Who gave you advice?

- The teacher of this subject
- A teacher from another subject area
- One of my parents/caregiver
- An employer
- Careers Adviser
- Another student who has already studied this subject
- A friend
- Other (please specify)

#### 87. What was the advice?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

### CONSTRUCTION

#### 89. How important were the following when you chose THIS subject?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>A Little Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am genuinely interested in this subject</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Good for my ATAR</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Pre-requisite for future study</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful to my future career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills for personal life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks good on my HSC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for my resume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends are in this class</td>
<td></td>
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<td>I like the teacher</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Only suitable subject on this line</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easier than other subjects on this line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If might help me get a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have studied this subject before and really enjoyed it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This subject has a reputation in this school for achieving high results.

#### 96. Did anyone give you advice on whether to study this subject or not?

- Yes
- No
Yr 11 Subject Selection Research

*126. Was it with TAFE or another Provider?
- TAFE - Classroom Based
- TAFE - Distance/Online
- TAFE - Block Delivery
- Another Provider - Classroom Based
- Another Provider - Distance/Online
- Another Provider - Block Delivery

*127. How important were the following when you chose this subject?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>A Little Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am genuinely interested in this subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am good at this subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for my ATAR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-requisite for future study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful to my future career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills for personal life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks good on my HSC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for my resume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends are in this class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Easier than other subjects on this line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It might help me get a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have studied this subject before and really enjoyed it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This subject has a good reputation for achieving high results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*128. Did anyone give you advice on whether to study this subject?
- Yes
- No

TVET Subject Advice

Yr 11 Subject Selection Research

*129. Who gave you advice?
- The teacher of this subject
- A teacher from another subject area
- One of my parents/carer
- An employer
- Careers Adviser
- Another student who has already studied this subject
- A friend

Other (please specify) 

*130. What was the advice?

SCHOOL BASED APPRENTICESHIP OR TRAINEESHIP

*131. School based apprenticeship or traineeship?
- Apprenticeship
- Traineeship

SCHOOL BASED TRAINEESHIP Subject Choice

*132. Why did you choose to do a school based traineeship?

*133. What type of traineeship are you doing?
**Yr 11 Subject Selection Research**

*135. How important were the following when you chose THIS subject?*

- Extremely Important
- Important
- A Little Important
- Not Important

- I am genuinely interested in this subject
- I am good at this subject
- Good for my ATAR
- Prerequisite for future study
- Useful to my future career
- Skills for personal life
- Looks good on my HSC
- Good for my resume
- My friends are in this class
- I like the teacher
- Only suitable subject on this line
- Easier than other subjects on this line
- It might help me get a job
- I have studied this subject before and really enjoyed it
- This subject has a reputation for achieving high results

*139. Did anyone give you advice on whether to study this subject or not?*

- Yes
- No

**SCHOOL BASED APPRENTICESHIP Subject Advice**

*140. Who gave you advice?*

- The teacher of this subject
- A teacher from another subject area
- One of my parent/caregiver
- An employer
- Careers Adviser
- Another student who has already studied this subject
- A friend
- Other (please specify)

*141. What was the advice?*


**What is VET?**

VET courses are nationally accredited industry courses that can be studied at school, TAFE, with another provider or as part of a school based apprenticeship or traineeship.

**SCHOOL BASED APPRENTICESHIP Subject Advice**

*142. Who gave you advice?*

- The teacher of this subject
- A teacher from another subject area
- One of my parent/caregiver
- An employer
- Careers Adviser
- Another student who has already studied this subject
- A friend
- Other (please specify)

*143. What was the advice?*


**Did you choose any other courses not previously listed?**

*144. Did you choose any other courses not listed previously?*

- Yes
- No

**Other Course Choice**

*145. Please indicate what the other course was*


352
Appendix C: Parent survey

Parent Survey Year 11 Subject Choice

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, the survey is part of a data gathering strategy for research purposes. The information used will be used to help guide subject selection processes.

*1. Is your child a boy or a girl?
   - [ ] Boy
   - [ ] Girl

*2. Does your child intend to complete Year 12?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Maybe
   - [ ] Only if does not gain a job

*3. What type of career path is your child considering? (multiple answers allowed)
   - [ ] A career that requires a university qualification
   - [ ] A career that requires TAFE or private provider qualification
   - [ ] Apprenticeship
   - [ ] A career that requires no formal training
   - [ ] My child has not decided

4. Please complete this statement - I believe HSC subjects should ...

5. What subjects would you RECOMMEND your child to study and why?
   - [ ] Subject 1
   - [ ] Subject 2
   - [ ] Subject 3
   - [ ] Subject 4
   - [ ] Subject 5
   - [ ] Subject 6

*6. Are there any subjects that you would NOT recommend your child study?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

7. What subjects would you NOT recommend your child to study and why?
   - [ ] Subject 1
   - [ ] Subject 2
   - [ ] Subject 3
   - [ ] Subject 4
   - [ ] Subject 5
   - [ ] Subject 6

Advice

8. Whose role is it to advise students on subject selections for the HSC (multiple answers allowed)
   - [ ] School Leadership
   - [ ] Subject Coordinators
   - [ ] School Teachers
   - [ ] Careers Advisers
   - [ ] Industry/Employers
   - [ ] University Representatives
   - [ ] TAFE Representatives
   - [ ] Parents
   - [ ] The students' friends
   - [ ] None of the above
   - [ ] All of the above

Other please specify:

9. Who should not provide advice on subject selection choices
   - [ ]

10. Parent Advice on Subject Choices
    Please rate how confident you feel in providing advice to your child about subject selection? (0 being extremely confident)
**11.** What information did you find most helpful to you, please rank (please indicate n/a if these responses did not apply in your situation)

- Subject Selection Handbooks
- Subject Selection Information Nights
- Individual interviews with the Careers Advisor
- Information from Employers
- Information from Universities
- Information from TAFE
- Subject showcase and demonstration
- Discussions with teachers
- Discussions with parents of students who had undertaken HSC study recently
- Individual interviews with school personnel for the purpose of subject guidance

**12.** What further information or support could be given to help you advise your child?

![Image of further information or support]

**Parent Survey Year 11 Subject Choice**

**13.** What would you like your child to "get" from undertaking senior secondary studies?

- Entry into university
- A high ATAR
- Completion of their schooling
- A HSC certificate or similar qualification
- Maturity
- An opportunity to be a leader in the school
- Skills that will enable them to thrive at university
- Qualifications to add to their resume
- Opportunities to get study from school recognised in post-school education, in advanced standing in courses as a result of HSC study
- Sporting opportunities
- Music opportunities
- Time to decide on a career pathway
- Skills for life
- Friends and a social life
- Opportunities to participate in school activities such as music clubs

**14.** Do you want your child to "get" anything else not previously listed, if so what is it?

![Image of additional information]

**15.** What do you believe students should learn during their Higher School Certificate?

![Image of higher school certificate]

**16.** What advice do you give your child in relation to career pathway?

![Image of career pathway advice]
**Yr 11 Subject Selection Research**

**157. Please rate your intentions of study after the HSC?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAFE</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>No Interest</th>
<th>Some Interest</th>
<th>Very Interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other Provider</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No study</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army/Airforce/Navy</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-job training eg Police Force</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**158. What career are you interested in?**


**159. Do you intend staying at school till the end of Year 12?**

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Only if I don’t get a job

**160. What do your parents want you to do after school?**


**161. Do you have any suggestions on what subjects should be offered in the future?**


**162. What do you think HSC subjects “should be” for students, eg they should be fun, they should be useful etc. Please complete this statement “HSC subjects should be ..........”**


**Yr 11 Subject Selection Research**

**163. Please rate the following ways of gaining information about subjects in order of usefulness to you when you made your subject selection decisions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Least</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 10 subject information sessions with my parents and the whole year group</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10 subject information sessions at school with no parents attending</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with school staff and my parents</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with school staff on my own</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with the school career adviser on my own</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the school careers adviser with my parents</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students currently doing the subject telling you about it</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each subject area presenting information on their subjects</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sessions conducted by the school career adviser</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School subject information handbook or information sheets</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THANK YOU**

Thank you for your time in participating in this survey. The results will be used in academic research and also provided to the school to guide decisions for future students in relation to the subjects offered as part of the HSC.

**Not participating**

Thank you for your time.
Appendix D: Student survey results

**Genuine interest for the subject**

As shown in the Figure below, genuine interest was important when choosing most subjects although some subjects reflected this reason was more highly valued than others. It was most highly ranked for subjects such as VETiS Metal and Engineering, VETiS Entertainment, Languages, Creative Arts and History. Genuine interest was least ranked for subjects such as Religious Education, English, Human Science and Its Environment, VETiS Construction, VETiS Business, TVET and Mathematics.

*Figure Appendix D-1 Subject choice: genuine interest*
**Being ‘good at the subject’**

As shown in the Figure below, student ability was more important as a reason to choose a subject in some subjects more than others. Being ‘good’ at the subject was very important in subjects such as VETiS Entertainment, VETiS Metal & Engineering and Creative Arts. Ability within a subject was less likely to be important as a subject choice reason in Religious Education, Human Science and Its Environment, VETiS Construction and TVET.

*Figure Appendix D-2 Subject choice: being ‘good’ at the subject*
Subject ‘good’ for ATAR

As shown in the Figure below, the perception or consideration that some subjects will perform better on an ATAR score than others was part of the decision-making process for students. Subjects more highly ranked for ATAR potential were VETiS Entertainment, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education, Languages, Mathematics and VETiS Hospitality. Subjects least likely to be chosen for ATAR potential were Content Endorsed Courses, TVET and VETiS Construction.

![Subject "Good" for ATAR](image_url)

*Figure Appendix D-3 Subject choice, being 'good' for ATAR*
**Pre-requisite for future study**

As shown in the Figure below, the majority of subjects were not highly ranked as a reason for choice due to being a pre-requisite for future study. VETiS Entertainment was ranked highly as a reason due to the notion of being a pre-requisite for future study. The subjects next most highly ranked were VETiS Metal & Engineering, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education, Science and Mathematics.

*Figure Appendix D-4 Subject choice: pre-requisite for future study*
**Career intent**

As shown in the Figure below, career intent was a motivator for students to choose subjects more than pre-requisite for future study. Career intent was ranked highly as a reason for choosing VETiS Entertainment, VETiS Metal and Engineering and SBAT. Next most highly ranked were Technology, PDHPE, Science, Maths and TVET. Least highly ranked were Religious Education, History and Content Endorsed courses.

![Career Intent Graph](image)

*Figure Appendix D-5 Subject choice: career intent*
Skills for personal life

As shown in the Figure below, the majority of subjects were chosen due to the skills gained being useful for personal life, with the exception of Religious Education, Science and History. The subjects which ranked the highest in this reason for choice were VETiS Entertainment, VETiS Metal & Engineering, SBAT, Languages, VETiS Hospitality and Creative Arts.

Figure Appendix D-6 Subject choice: skills for personal life
Subject looks ‘good’ on HSC transcript

The Figure below shows that all subjects ranked reasonably highly for the selection reason to look ‘good’ on the HSC transcript. The subjects which were seen as more likely to be chosen for the capacity to look ‘good’ on the HSC transcripts were VETiS Entertainment, Languages, VETiS Metal & Engineering, PDHPE, Technology and Mathematics. Subjects which were indicated to be less likely to be chosen for this reason were Content Endorsed, Religious Education and VETiS Construction.

Figure Appendix D-7 Subject choice: looks ‘good’ on HSC transcript
‘Good’ for resume

The ranking of subjects which were chosen by students to be ‘good’ for their resumes is shown in the Figure below. Subjects where students indicated this was most likely to influence choice were all VETiS areas, Languages and Technology. Subjects selected which were least likely to be influenced for resume use were Creative Arts, Content Endorsed, History and Religious Education.

![good_for_resume_diagram](image)

*Figure Appendix D-8 Subject choice: good for resume*
To be with friends

The Figure below shows that choosing subjects based on being with friends was not highly considered as an influence for all subjects except VETiS entertainment and SBAT. The subject which ranked lowest for ‘being with friends’ was History followed by Religious Education, Science and TVET.

![Figure Appendix D-9 Subject Choice: to be with friends](image)

**Liking the teacher**

The Figure below shows that subject choice based on liking the teacher was ranked of medium importance in all subjects, with the exception of VETiS Entertainment and SBAT. These two subjects were indicated as high for teacher popularity prompting choice of subject; next most highly ranked for this reason was Languages. Students’ opinion of the teacher and their ‘likeability’ was a contributor to subject choice for all subjects.

*Figure Appendix D-10 Subject choice: liking the teacher*
Only suitable subject on that line

The method by which students were asked to make their selections had a large impact on subject choices according to the survey data. School leadership indicated that subjects were allocated to lines based on indicated student interest via a computer application, although final decisions could be altered based on school agenda and reputation (Key School Personnel). The final choices were based on best fit for lines and the Figure below shows that this had a large impact on student choice. Final timetable lines with allocated subjects were then given to students to ‘select’ from, students were required to choose one from each line. The following graph shows the subjects that students chose because it was the only subject suitable to them on that line.

![Figure Appendix D-11 Subject choice: only suitable subject on that line](image-url)
**Easier than other subjects on that line**

When subject choices have been allocated to best fit, related to student indication of preference and leadership decisions, students were then asked to make final decisions. At this stage the difficulty of the subject was indicated as an influencer on subject choices and subsequently used in the survey.

The Figure below shows that when subjects were compared to other subjects on a line for difficulty, students who chose SBATs indicated that this was a very important influence on their decision to study this. Other subjects where the compared level of difficulty and the feeling that the subject they would choose to study would be easier than others on the line were VETiS Business Services, VETiS Construction, VETiS Metals & Engineering, VETiS Hospitality, Content Endorsed (non-ATAR), Community and Family Studies and PDHPE. The subject that was least likely to be influenced due to the perception that it was easier than other subjects was VETiS Entertainment.

*Figure Appendix D-11 Subject choice: easier than other subjects on that line*
This subject might help to get a job

The Figure below shows that potential for subjects to assist in gaining employment, either post-school or during school, was indicated as an influencer though the degree of influence varied between subjects. Students who chose VETiS Entertainment, VETiS Metals & Engineering and SBATs indicated that this influence was of high importance when selecting the subject. Students who chose Religious Education, History and Content Endorsed courses indicated that this influence was of lower importance when choosing these subjects.

Figure Appendix D-12 Subject choice: might help to get a job
**Have done this type of subject previously and enjoyed it**

The Figure below shows that many subjects were indicated as being selected due to previous enjoyment of a similar subject. The subjects indicated as having the greatest influence on subject choice from previous experience were PDHPE, Languages and Technology. Subjects having the least influence due to previous experience were VETiS Entertainment, Community and Family Studies and Religious Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SBAT (School Based Apprenticeships and...)</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVET (externally delivered VET courses)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET Business Services</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET Entertainment</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET Information Technology</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET Construction</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET Metal &amp; Engineering</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET Hospitality</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Arts</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Endorsed (Non ATAR General Courses)</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community &amp; Family Studies</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development, Health and Physical...</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Science and Its Environment</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure Appendix D-13 Subject choice: done this type of subject previously and enjoyed it*
This subject has a reputation in this school for achieving high results in the HSC examination

The Figure below shows that the reputation of a subject in relation to the HSC examination performance was an influencer in most subjects. Subjects which were most highly indicated as being chosen due to their reputation for HSC examination performance were VETIS Hospitality, VETIS Metal & Engineering and Technology. Subjects which had the least importance placed on previous reputation were VETIS Entertainment, PDHPE and Content Endorsed courses. It is important to note that the VETIS Entertainment course was a new course addition to the school involved, therefore had no previous reputation.

Figure Appendix D-14 Subject choice: this subject has a reputation in this school for achieving high results in the HSC examination
## Appendix E: Interview questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probe Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Subject Choices</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. What is the process in your school for students to make subject choices for Year 11? | a) When does this occur?  
   b) Who is involved? |
| 2. How do students gain information on different subjects? | a) What documents are involved?  
   b) What type of information is included about the different subjects?  
   c) How is information about VETiS courses given to students? |
| 3. How do students get advice on which subjects they should take? | a) Who gives this advice?  
   b) Why is advice given?  
   c) Are students given specific advice or encouragement for any subjects?  
   d) Which subjects?  
   e) Why? |
| 4. Who else in the school gives advice to students regarding subject choice? | a) Is this advice formally or informally given?  
   Please explain. |
| 5. Who other than school personnel gives advice to students? | a) What type advice is given?  
   b) Why is advice given? |
| 6. What do you believe are the important things students need to know in relation to subject choices? As individuals. | a) Why?  
   b) How does advice vary between students? |
| 7. Which students are advised to study VETiS courses? | a) Why?  
   b) Which students are advised NOT to study a VETiS course?  
   c) Why?  
   d) Who gives this advice?  
   e) Which students are enrolling in VETiS courses?  
   f) What are the reasons for this? |
| 8. Why do you believe students undertake senior secondary study? | a) What is the value of the HSC to students?  
   b) Why do they stay on at school?  
   a) How do students use the HSC post-school? |
| 9. How are students selected for subjects? | a) Why?  
   b) Who makes these decisions? |
<p>| 10. Do students ever get subjects that they originally did not choose? | a) What happens then in the subject selection process? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>a)</th>
<th>b)</th>
<th>c)</th>
<th>d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject Implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How does the school decide on which subjects to offer in Year 11?</td>
<td>a) Who makes these decisions?</td>
<td>b) What informs these decisions?</td>
<td>c) On what basis are these decisions made?</td>
<td>d) Who are the internal and external stakeholders who influence subject offerings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Why does this school offer VETiS?</td>
<td>a) Who made this decision?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How do decisions in relation to VETiS subjects differ from other subjects?</td>
<td>a) Who makes these decisions?</td>
<td>b) What influences which new VETiS subjects are offered?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How does the school make decisions on which subjects will ‘run’?</td>
<td>a) Who makes these decisions?</td>
<td>b) What rules apply to these decisions if any?</td>
<td>c) How is this similar or different in relation to VETiS subjects?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How are decisions made in relation to which subjects are allocated to which timetable lines?</td>
<td>a) Why?</td>
<td>b) How does this impact on student subject selections?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. What is the school process for alternative VETiS pathways? Such as TVET and School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships.</td>
<td>a) Who gives advice on this?</td>
<td>b) What issues are considered in relation to TVET?</td>
<td>c) What issues are considered in relation to SBATs?</td>
<td>d) How does this influence subject selection and implementation in schools?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 18. How is VETiS managed within the school? | a) What is the role of the VETiS coordinator?  
b) How is it recognised i.e. time allocation or coordinator points?  
c) What is the selection process for a VETiS coordinator?  
d) How is the VETiS coordinator involved in subject advice to students?  
e) How is the VETiS coordinator involved in subject implementation (which subjects to offer)?  
f) What role does the VETiS coordinator have in school decision-making processes? |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 19. How is career advice given in the school? | a) What is the role of the Career Adviser?  
b) What is the selection process for a Career Adviser?  
c) How is it recognised i.e. time allocation or coordinator points?  
d) What is the expectation of the school for advice given to students?  
e) How is the Career Adviser involved in subject advice to students?  
f) How is the Career Adviser involved in subject implementation (which subjects to offer)?  
g) What role does the Career Adviser have in school decision-making processes? |
| 20. How has the new school leaving age of 17 affected the school’s delivery of the HSC? | a) How does that affect school management decisions?  
b) How does that affect subjects in the school?  
c) What strategies are used to deal with this? |
| School VETiS participation and subjects offered trends | |}

21. Can you please consider the data table, (shown), which is a collation of information from RTOs online on participation and implementation of VETiS at this school and comment on the data given?  
| a) Why do you think the participation has changed in various years?  
b) Why have course numbers changed in various years?  
c) What do you believe has contributed to these changes? |
### Appendix F: Diocese leadership questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probe Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Why do you think students choose to study VETiS?</td>
<td>a) Which students study VETiS?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Which students don’t study VETiS?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  What stops them from enrolling?</td>
<td>a) Who, what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Which students should study VETiS?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  How do schools make decisions on which courses to offer in relation to VETiS?</td>
<td>a) Who makes these decisions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) What is considered?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  What do you believe are the enablers and barriers to VETiS subjects being implemented in the schools?</td>
<td>a) Who, What, When, Where?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Who are the key stakeholders when schools are deciding to offer subjects?</td>
<td>a) Internal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) External?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Why do you believe there are differences between schools in the implementation of and participation in VETiS?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Who advises students in relation to subject choices?</td>
<td>a) Internal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) External?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Focus group—VET teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of focus group</strong></td>
<td>The purpose of this research is to gain insight as to the reasons behind variation between schools in relation to VETIS implementation and enrolment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How the interview data will be used</strong></td>
<td>The data will be used in a Doctoral thesis to give insights to specific issues which may affect student subject selection and school subject implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confidentiality</strong></td>
<td>No schools nor the diocese will be identified in the report, reference may be given to the type of physical location a school may be located in. No individuals will be identified in the report, participant categories may be if relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method of recording</strong></td>
<td>The interviewer will take notes and tape the interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview Length</strong></td>
<td>It is aimed that this interview will take less than an hour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will follow this guide as we go through the focus group interview. I may take a few notes on the sheets, but mostly I want to concentrate on our talking. Do I have your permission to tape this interview so that I don't have to take so many notes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probe Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 What do you believe are the contributing factors to which subjects will be offered at this school in the HSC? | a) Why do you think this is the case?  
                 b) Who are the internal and external stakeholders? |
| 2 How do schools make decisions on which courses to offer in relation to VET? | b) Who makes these decisions?  
                 c) What factors are considered? |
| 3 When comparing decisions made in relation to subjects that will be offered during Stage 6 are the decisions made based on the same criteria for both VET subjects and non-VET subjects? | a) What criteria is used in the school?  
                 a. For VET subjects?  
                 b. For non-VET subjects? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>a)</th>
<th>b)</th>
<th>c)</th>
<th>d)</th>
<th>e)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 If there are any differences between VET courses and non-VET courses</td>
<td>If there are any differences between VET courses and non-VET courses why do you believe they exist?</td>
<td>a. What or who in the school makes this happen?</td>
<td>b. What is it about VET that makes this happen?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Do you believe VET is considered in the same light as other subjects</td>
<td>Do you believe VET is considered in the same light as other subjects in this school by school staff?</td>
<td>a. In which way is it seen?</td>
<td>b. How staff see VET compared to other subjects?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Why do you believe students continue to stay at the school from Year 10</td>
<td>Why do you believe students continue to stay at the school from Year 10?</td>
<td>c) What do you think they want from the experience?</td>
<td>d) What makes them want to stay at school?</td>
<td>e) What value do they place on the HSC certificate?</td>
<td>f) What value do they place on the ATAR?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 What role do parents have in a student continuing on to Stage 6?</td>
<td>What role do parents have in a student continuing on to Stage 6?</td>
<td>a) What do parents want for their child from the experience?</td>
<td>b) Do students and parents share the same ‘wants’ for the HSC experience?</td>
<td>c) Why do you think this is the case?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Why do you think students choose to study VET in your school?</td>
<td>Why do you think students choose to study VET in your school?</td>
<td>d) Which students study VET?</td>
<td></td>
<td>e) Which students don’t study VET?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Who gives advice to students in relation to subject choices?</td>
<td>Who gives advice to students in relation to subject choices?</td>
<td>a) Are any specific students more encouraged to study VET than other students?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a. Which students?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Who encourages?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c. Why?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) Are any students encouraged NOT to study a VET course?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a. Which students?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Who encourages?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c. Why?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 What do you believe are the barriers that relate to the uptake of VET</td>
<td>What do you believe are the barriers that relate to the uptake of VET in this school by students?</td>
<td>a. What factors contribute to these barriers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 What do you believe are the enablers that relate to the uptake of VET</td>
<td>What do you believe are the enablers that relate to the uptake of VET in this school by students?</td>
<td>b. What factors contribute to these enablers?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a. In school?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. External to school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H: Ethics approval

Ethics Register Number: N2011 83
Project Title: Implementation and Participation in Vocational Education and Training in Catholic Schools. (Implementation and Participation in VETiS)
End Date: 31/12/2012

This email is to advise that your application has been reviewed by the University Human Research Ethics Committee and confirmed as meeting the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Whilst the data collection of your project has received ethical clearance, the decision to commence and authority to commence may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process. For example, your research may need ethics clearance from other organisations or permissions from other organisations to access staff. Therefore the proposed data collection should not commence until you have satisfied these requirements.

If you require a formal approval certificate, please respond via reply email and one will be issued.

Decisions related to low risk ethical review are subject to ratification at the next available Committee meeting. You will only be contacted again in relation to this matter if the Committee raises any additional questions or concerns.

This project has been awarded ethical clearance until 31/12/2012 and a progress report must be submitted at least once every twelve months.

Researchers who fail to submit an appropriate progress report may have their ethical clearance revoked and/or the ethical clearances of other projects suspended. When your project has been completed please complete and submit a progress/final report form and advise us by email at your earliest convenience. The information researchers provide on the security of records, compliance with approval consent procedures and documentation and responses to special conditions is reported to the NHMRC on an annual basis. In accordance with NHMRC the ACU HREC may undertake annual audits of any projects considered to be of more than low risk.


For modifications to your project, please complete and submit a Modification form: [http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/staff/research_ethics/](http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/staff/research_ethics/)

Researchers must immediately report to HREC any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol eg: changes to protocols or unforeseen circumstances or adverse effects on participants.

Please do not hesitate to contact the office if you have any queries.

Kind regards,

Ms Jo Mushin
Ethics Officer | Research Services
Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) Australian Catholic University Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy, VIC, 3065  T: 03 9953 3158  F: 03 9953 3150
Ethics Register Number : N2011 83
Project Title : Implementation and Participation in Vocational Education and Training in Catholic Schools. (Implementation and Participation in VETiS)
Data Collection Date Extended: 31/12/2014
Thank you for returning the Ethics Progress Report for your project.

The Deputy Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your request to extend the period of data collection. The new expiry date for data collection is the 31/12/2014.

We wish you well in this ongoing project.

Kind regards,
Ms Jo Mushin
Appendix I: Subject selection reasons

The defined list (gained from the pilot phase of this research) of reasons for student subject choice were:

1. Genuine interest in the subject
2. Being good at the subject
3. The subject will be good for the Australian Tertiary Admission Ranking
4. This subject is a pre-requisite for future study
5. The subject is useful for my future career
6. The subject will give me skills for my personal life
7. This subject looks good on a Higher School Certificate
8. This subject is good for my resume
9. My friends are choosing this subject
10. I like the teacher
11. It was the only subject suitable to me on that timetable line
12. This subject is easier than other subjects on that timetable line
13. This subject might help me get a job
14. I have done this subject before and enjoyed it
15. This subject has a reputation for achieving high HSC examination results