Higher Education and Student Aspirations

A survey of the adaptive preferences of Year 9 students in Corio, Victoria

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1| Executive summary

In recent times, student aspiration for higher education has become the subject of Australian Government policy and school/university partnerships. A perceived shortfall in aspiration for higher education – particularly by under-represented groups – is seen to be frustrating the achievement of the Government's targets for universities.

Announced in 2009, the targets stipulate that: (1) by 2020, 20 per cent of students participating in university should be from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds; and (2) by 2025, 40 per cent of 25-34 year olds should hold a bachelor degree (Australian Government, 2009, pp. 12-13). Progress towards these targets has been slow and, given current trajectories, there is some doubt that they can be achieved (Sellar, et al. 2011; Gale & Parker 2013). Increasing students' aspirations for higher education is seen to be a way in which to address this problem, although very little is known about actual levels of student aspiration for higher education among various populations or about the nature of student aspiration itself.

This report documents research commissioned by Deakin University's Access and Equity division as part of their Participation and Partnerships Program (DUPPP), which investigates the aspirations for higher education (HE) of approximately 70 Year 9 students from Northern Bay College (NBC) in Corio, Victoria. Data on these students' aspirations are derived from their participation during 2013 in The Australian Survey of Student Aspirations (TASSA). Students were surveyed twice across the year, once in April and once in October. NBC consists of seven campuses in Corio, northern Geelong, Victoria.

The data shows a drop in rates of aspiration for both HE and VET (Vocational Education and Training) from the first sitting to the second. This suggests an underlying disinterest by students in post-secondary education. Students also lacked access to relevant information that would assist them to make decisions regarding their post-school futures. For instance, students said that they needed to go to university when the career path they have nominated for their future does not require a university qualification.

There were some notable differences in students' responses between the two survey sittings. For example, students selected occupations of lower prestige in the second sitting. By this second sitting of the survey students expressed greater reliance on friends and family – who themselves have limited experience and knowledge of HE and VET – for information and guidance regarding post school aspirations. Further, fewer students chose to participate in the October round sitting of the survey with only 34 students participating in both survey sittings. This lack of engagement is itself suggestive of students' disinterest in a HE future.

In this context, the finding that approximately 70% of students surveyed expressed an aspiration for HE in the April sitting strongly suggests that students are giving the answers they think are wanted or are a reflection of students' recognition of official taste. This also raises doubts about the findings of other research (conducted elsewhere; e.g. Bowen & Doughney, 2010; James, 2002) that indicates similarly high rates of aspiration. By the second sitting of the survey there appeared to be a much closer alignment with the need for and perception of required qualifications for desired occupations. (Although male students, more commonly than female students, still over-estimate what qualifications they need for specific careers.) This shift towards more specific responses suggests that this student cohort, though

much smaller in size, is better informed about their choices for their futures. This may also be evidence of students' adaptive preferences. Students retrospectively adjust their preferences to fit what they later perceive they are capable of achieving.

This drop in the number of students aspiring to any form of post-secondary education as well as the lack of student engagement with the survey, has implications for further research in schools such as NBC. The nature and timing of the survey, along with the heavy presence of external partners, may lead to a degree of disengagement and fatigue with activities and programs that aim to 'raise' the aspirations of young people from disadvantaged communities.

2| Context

2.1 *Corio employment and education demographics*

Northern Bay P-12 College (NBC) is located in the Corio/Norlane region north of Geelong. Distinguishing the region are numerous unique challenges faced by its population, including entrenched disadvantage found in pockets of the community. According to the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data, there are 6,649 families living in Corio/Norlane with a median weekly family household income of $744, a figure that is below the national average (ABS, 2013). Unemployment is reported at 10.9%, higher than both the national and state averages (ABS, 2013). The most common occupations in the region include labourers (20.7%), technicians and trade workers (16.8%), machinery operators and drivers (13.4%), and community and personal service workers (12.0%). Similar distributions are reflected in this research, in students' responses to The Australian Survey of Student Aspirations (TASSA) about their parents' occupations, although over half of students were unaware of their parents' occupations (52% did not know their mother's occupation, and 59% did not know their father's occupation).

Participation in post-secondary education in the region is indicative of its educational disadvantage. The census data show that 11.9% of people in the region were attending a tertiary or technical institution in 2011, with only 4.2% enrolled at university. This is well under the national average of 14.3% regional university participation (ABS, 2013). On the issue of highest level of education attainment, 39.6% of people in the Corio/Norlan region have attained post-school qualifications, with 3.6% of residents achieving a Bachelor degree, 4% an Advanced Diploma or Diploma, and 18.4% a Certificate.[1] Nearly half (47.5%) of all residents in the area have not completed school beyond Year 10. As indicated in Chapter 5 of this report, the majority of NBC students who completed TASSA had parents with a median level of education of some secondary school. Similarly, only three students' mothers and one student's father have obtained a university education.

In sum, NBC student responses within TASSA in relation to parental education and employment (see Chapter 5) are comparable to ABS census data suggesting that while the number of students surveyed is small, the data are broadly reflective of the region.

2.2 *Northern Bay College*

Northern Bay College was formed in 2011 as a result of a merger of nine schools into one multi-campus college. In 2012, its total student population was 2,143 students across six campuses (one Prep-to-Year 7 campus, four Prep-to-Year-8 campuses and one Year-9-to-12 campus) (ACARA, 2013).[2] The College has 247 equivalent full time staff, 14 principal level administrative staff members, 174 teachers and 74 Education Support Staff (DEECD, 2012). According to *MySchool* (ACARA, 2013), the numbers of teaching staff and support staff are 201 (187.9 FTE) and 115 (85.7 FTE) respectively. These figures, as a staff-to-student ratio, are slightly lower but comparable to the state average of 13.5 for all levels of schooling (15.0 for primary school, 11.9 for secondary school) (ABS, 2012). The state and national ratios do

[1] See National Regional Profile (ASGS): National Regional Profile: Population/People Corio http://stat.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?QueryId=542

[2] See http://www.myschool.edu.au/SchoolProfile/Index/63750/NorthernBayP12College/50291/2012#BookmarkLink

not take into account teacher aides and other non-teaching staff who may also assist in the delivery of school education.

The reorganisation of the schools into a single college in 2011 was informed by a desire to act on student performance data across a number of years, which demonstrated that schools in the region were consistently averaging student outcomes at a level below State benchmarks (Northern Bay College, 2013).[3] These student performances are consistent with other measures of disadvantage in the area and are often associated with educational disadvantage. For example, the Student Family Occupation Index (SFO) range within the College is between 0.70 and 0.85 (state wide median SFO density for mainstream schools = 0.513), which indicates high levels of unemployment and social disadvantage in the region (ACARA, 2013). The school receives funding based on its SFOs, explicitly for students perceived to be at risk of not achieving success at school. Similarly, the school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value of 916, which is below the national average of 1000 (ACARA, 2013).

Students enrolled in Years 9 to 12 attend the Goldsworthy Road Campus. This is the only campus of the College that caters to secondary school students through to Year 12. In 2013, the campus had a total student enrolment of 371, with 90 of these students enrolled in Year 9. Aside from being the College's main administration centre, the campus is also home to a number of additional extra-curricular resources including: the Northern Bay Child Care and Kindergarten Centre and Family Centre; the Geelong Industry Trade Training Centre; and the NBC Connect programs, including a Young Parent Access Program (Northern Bay College, 2013). Of particular interest to this study is a dedicated Year 9 Learning Centre where students participate in school and community-based learning programs (Northern Bay College, 2013).

The school's NAPLAN results are broadly similar to comparable or 'like' schools, with NBC Year 9 students tending to fall below the National Minimum Standard (DEECD, 2012, p. 9). NBC's NAPLAN results in 2012 were 'Significantly Below' (two standard deviations) the national average across all five NAPLAN domains in all year levels tested (Years 3, 5, 7 and 9) with the exception of 'spelling' in Year 3 which was 'Below' average (one standard deviation).

Progressing to the more senior years, 81% of Year 12 students at the College satisfactorily completed their Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in 2012 (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2012). The College's results for VCE students are similar to like schools but below 60% of Victorian Government Schools (DEECD, 2012, p. 9). Similarly, 73% of VET units of competence and 60% of Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) credits were satisfactorily completed in the same year (DEECD, 2013, p. 9). For a comprehensive summary of the school's approach to learning and student performance see DEECD (2012).

Students at Northern Bay College have traditionally been under-represented in university education after completing their secondary education. The most recent *On Track* data (see Table 2.1 below) reinforces this pattern with 12% of Year 12 or equivalent completers

[3] http://www.northernbaycollege.vic.edu.au/

enrolled in university in April 2013 (six months after completion of Year 12) (DEECD, 2013). This compares with 48% in the Greater Geelong region and 53% in Victoria. Northern Bay College Year 12 graduates were more likely than both their Geelong and Victorian peers to be enrolled six6 months later in TAFE or VET courses, or employed in part-time or full-time work. For comparisons of all data and other schools in the region see On Track Data, DEECD (2013).

Table 2.1: School destination results, Year 12 or equivalent completers, On Track survey data: Greater Geelong LGA

		NBC	Greater Geelong	Victoria
In education or training	**Apprentice/Trainee (%)**	8	9	6
	TAFE/VET enrolled (%)	44	14	15
	University enrolled (%)	12	48	53
Not in education or training	**Employed (%)**	32	22	18
	Looking for work (%)	4	5	5
	NIFLET* (%)	0	1	1

Source: On Track Survey Data *(Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013)*

2.3 *Partnership activities at NBC*

Northern Bay College is engaged in a wide variety of co-curricular activities run in partnership with external organisations. These organisations are varied, spanning the public, community and corporate sectors. The College displays the logos of twelve organisational partners on their website – including Shell, the Australian Red Cross, Deakin University, the Lions Club and The Smith Family – although the number of the College's partnerships is estimated to be around 60.

One example is the *Aspire* program, which operates at Northern Bay College in collaboration with both the DEECD and Deakin University. The *Aspire* program is intended to provide students with an opportunity to gain interactive experiences of university. It has been operating since 2011, beginning with 15 students participating in its first year and growing to 60 students in 2012 and 2013. The students chosen to be involved in the program have been identified as having academic potential. Two groups of students are currently involved in *Aspire*, separated into year level groups. Both of these groups, the Years 6 to 8 and Years 9 to 11 students, travel to the Waurn Ponds campus of Deakin University once a week where they 'audit' undergraduate tutorials and attend lectures. In 2012 the program was extended to include a specialist science component, enabling students to undertake more complex science-centred activities. These activities are run in conjunction with Science Works and the BioLab, the Victorian BioSciences Education Centre, which is an initiative of Deakin University and is located in Geelong.

The school also provides a range of in-house student wellbeing programs. These aim to meet the needs of students whose learning might otherwise be impeded by social, physical, psychological and other types of disabilities or personal circumstances. Each campus has a Learning Partner who oversees all student welfare needs. In addition to these student welfare workers, the school employs five chaplains, each working two days per week at one of the five campuses. There is also a Family Worker who is at the school one day of the week and is responsible for providing counselling and case management support for families with children enrolled at the school. The chaplains and family worker are positions financed through the Australian Government's National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program (NSCSWP).

An example of the ‘in-house’ programs offered by the school is the Program for Students with a Disability (PSD). PSD is a Victorian Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) initiative aimed at improving learning outcomes for all students. It acknowledges student diversity and seeks to identify individual learning and behavioural needs. The school currently has 93 students who are involved with the PSD.

It is in this context of low levels of educational attainment in the broader community as well as low academic achievement, and low rates of progression to higher education among NBC’s students, that the school has become the focus of HEPPP-funded projects. The concern with improving educational outcomes and with ‘raising’ aspiration for HE has contributed to the formulation of TASSA and its implementation in NBC. The conceptual underpinnings of the survey are explored in the following chapter.

3| Conceptual framework

Sellar and Gale (2011) define aspiration as "the capacity to imagine futures". In this report, this is conceived as comprised of six interrelated concepts: social imaginary (Taylor, 2004); taste (i.e. status) (Bourdieu, 1984); desire (Butler, 1987); possibility (Bourdieu, 1984); sociocultural navigation (Appadurai, 2004; de Certeau, 1984) and resources (financial and material but also collective knowledges and experiences; Appadurai, 2004). Derived from the international research literature, each of these concepts is understood to be socioculturally informed rather than being simply the whim of disparate individuals. As anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2004, p. 67) notes, while aspirations:

> ... have something to do with [individual] wants, preferences, choices and calculations … [they] form parts of wider ethical and metaphysical ideas which derive from larger cultural norms. Aspirations are never simply individual (as the language of wants and choices inclines us to think). They are always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life.

This chapter provides a brief overview of these six aspiration concepts, which form the conceptual framework of the research. It is this combination that informed the development of the survey instrument (The Australian Survey of Student Aspirations) and the analysis of survey data (see Chapter 5). Each concept is reviewed for how it contributes to an understanding of aspiration and particularly student aspirations for higher education. In the past, aspirations for higher education were considered to be private matters for students and their families (Anderson et al., 1980). It has now become the subject of policy intervention by the Australian Government, and by governments of other OECD nations.

Given its importance in the current higher education context, an informed understanding of aspiration is needed by universities and schools seeking to encourage and enable more people from under-represented groups to enter university. The remainder of this chapter contributes to this more sophisticated understanding of aspiration and forms the basis for the research documented in this report.

3.1 *Social imaginary: a common understanding of collective social life*

Philosopher Charles Taylor (2004, p. 23) defines a social imaginary as "that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy." It recognises that people symbolically imagine their social existence: "how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (Taylor, 2004, p. 23). These are reflected in patterns, choices and consumption, "where matters of wealth and well-being, of taste and desire, of power and resistance" converge (Appadurai, 1996, p. 5). Put simply, social imaginary refers to the way "people imagine their collective social life" (Gaonkar, 2002, p. 10).

It is only recently that nations such as Australia have entertained the possibility of universal higher education (Trow, 1974, 2006) and have encouraged all Australians, including those from previously under-represented groups, to imagine a higher education for themselves. This new social imaginary for higher education is of "a universe of possibles equally possible for any possible subject" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64). There is evidence of this new imagination taking hold in Australia. For example, aspiration for higher education is high among students

from low SES backgrounds in urban areas of Australia (Bowden & Doughney, 2010; Prosser et al., 2008). Yet there remains a sense of "the accessible and the inaccessible, of what is and is not 'for us'" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64), evident in how sociocultural groups differently imagine what futures (e.g. which institutions, fields of study, careers, etc.) are desirable and possible (discussed below).

The insight from Taylor's work is that students' aspirations for higher education are shaped by how they imagine themselves fitting in with others, i.e. by how they imagine their social position in relation to others. Mills & Gale (2010) note that students are skilled at reading the futures that they believe fit them. Zipin et al. (2013) similarly describe aspirations that conform to where people see themselves fitting as "habituated aspirations". For example, research in the UK has identified that young people from low SES backgrounds demonstrate a resistance towards HE and a perception that it is for 'posher', 'cleverer' people, and for 'people with money' (Archer, Hollingworth, & Halsall, 2007, p. 231).

3.2 *Taste/Status: judgments about the relative merits of goods and practices*

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) discusses taste in three important ways. First, a person's *preferences* for one thing over another are never simply expressions of individual whim. They are always informed by the cultural norms associated with particular social classes. Second, taste is a claim to status among all possible preferences. It is the positive assessment of the preferences by the dominant social classes; thus, other preferences are regarded as less tasteful or tasteless. Third, goods and practices are considered tasteful when they contribute to the attainment or maintenance of dominant social positions (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 466).

In the same way, students' aspirations reveal their *future* preferences (e.g. for higher education, career, lifestyle, etc.). They reflect sociocultural judgments about the relative merits of imagined future goods, practices and social positions. However, taste is ascribed only to student aspirations for dominant social positions (e.g. doctor, lawyer, etc.) and associated goods and practices (e.g. particular institutions and qualifications). Drawing on Bourdieu, Zipin et al. (2013) label these more tasteful aspirations as 'doxic'. In short, students' aspirations reflect structural differences and inequalities (Burke, 2006, p. 724), with some aspirations given more legitimacy and/or status than others.

3.3 *Desire: the promise of an appreciable life*

Informing aspiration, desire is future and positively orientated; it begins with "question[s] of what constitutes an appreciable life" (Feher, 2009, p. 41). Objects of our desire comprise "a cluster of promises … [that we want to] make possible" (Berlant, 2011, p. 23). Judith Butler thus describes desire as "the building of ourselves" (Butler, 1987, p. 97). Yet we do not build our desires in isolation from others. There are some objects "which we ought to desire, even if we do not, goods such that we show ourselves up as inferior or bad by our not desiring them" (Taylor, 1985, p. 120).

For example, the Australian Government's current ambition is to "increase the aspirations of low SES students for higher education" (2009, p. 14). Higher education is now to be desired by all, but just by making it possible (e.g. through the removal of volume caps on student enrolments) does not in itself make HE desirable. In this context, having no desire for higher education can position students as having inappropriate, low or even no aspirations for the future at all. Hence, there is considerable work being undertaken by universities to 'build

aspirations' for higher education among people from previously under-represented groups; those whose aspirations are seen to be "in need of further cultivation" (Sellar, 2013, p. 254).

3.4 *Possibility: the limits on desire*

In the context of aspiration, what is desirable and what is possible are not always the same, even though they are often related (e.g. an important aim of desire is to make promises – to oneself – possible). References to possible aspirations are often made in recognition of the 'limits' (Archer & Yamashita, 2003) on desire. As Bourdieu et al. (1990, p. 159) suggest, there can be "disparity between aspirations and their realisation". Some aspirations for some people are "an abstract and impossible possibility" (Bourdieu et al., 1990, p. 16). What is a "reasonable possibility" for the dominant is often possible for marginalised groups only if they are placed in "different conditions of existence" (Bourdieu et al., 1990, pp. 16-17). In short, there are structural limits on aspiration, which differently apply according to where a person is positioned within social, cultural and economic arrangements.

In the context of HE, aspirations are thus formed within "opportunity structures" (Roberts, 2009). These refer to "the inter-relationships between family origins, education, labour market processes and employers' recruitment practices" that influence people's decisions (Roberts, 2009, p. 355). Different conditions of existence in relation to these structures mean that different aspirations are possible for differently positioned social groups. This goes some way to explain why university students from low SES backgrounds tend to be concentrated in particular fields of study (Gale & Parker, 2013). More generally, marginalised groups can experience 'broken trajectories' when the promises of education systems – that all aspirations are equally achievable – are not realised.

3.5 *Navigational capacity: the ability to recognise and pursue pathways to achieve goals*

Appadurai (2004) likens planning and working towards future goals to 'navigation', which requires knowledge of both a destination and intermediate stops (or nodes) along the way. For Appadurai, this navigation is a capacity that relies on resources – economic, social and cultural – including knowledge and previous experiences of successful navigation (i.e. one's own knowledge and experiences as well as the knowledge and experiences of one's sociocultural group). For de Certeau (1984), the knowledge required to navigate towards one's aspirations, can be characterised in two ways: 'map' knowledge and 'tour' knowledge. Those with map knowledge have an appreciation of the whole and of the end from the beginning. They have it all mapped out for them and can choose alternative routes if obstacles appear in their way. They have not just been given the map; they are the cartographers themselves. Whereas those with tour knowledge are subject to the limitations of the 'tour guide'. They follow the tour, a pre-determined route, that they trust will lead them to their desired destination. When confronted with obstacles, the alternatives tend to be to choose another tour.

Navigational capacity is thus different for different social groups who have varying access to these resources. More privileged and advantaged groups have more resources at their disposal when planning for the future. For them the "dense combination of nodes and pathways" on the "map of aspirations" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 69) are readily apparent, accessible and well-trodden. Less advantaged groups have "a smaller number of aspirational nodes and a thinner, weaker sense of the pathways from concrete wants to intermediate contexts to general norms and back again" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 69). The result is that people

from disadvantaged backgrounds are less able to successfully navigate from where they are to where they want to be in the future, particularly if they are attempting to navigate pathways that are outside their experience or the experience of their sociocultural group. It is not uncommon for people with tour knowledge to alter or adjust their aspirations.

School students from disadvantaged backgrounds are similarly less able to realise their aspirations for the future. They may well aspire to participate in higher education but the limited sociocultural and material resources available to them diminish their capacity to attain that aspiration. For example, not having a close relative who has attended university to provide advice and understandings of the correct choice of subject or university can lessen a student's capacity to navigate their way from secondary school to a particular university course. The often tacit knowledge shared by those with pre-existing networks and experiences with higher education are less readily available to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In particular, limited knowledge of the intermediate steps or alternative pathways to the destination, should the original strategy not succeed, means that students from certain backgrounds are less capable of realising their aspirations for HE.

3.6 *Resources: the capital involved in forming & realising aspirations*

Resources play two important roles in relation to aspirations: they inform both the planning of aspirations, and working towards them. This includes financial and material resources but it also includes social and cultural resources. For example, previous experiences of aspiring – their articulation as well as their pursuit and achievement – are a resource on which individuals are able to draw when aspiring again. The opportunity to accumulate experiences – to build an 'archive' of experiences (Appadurai 2003, 2004) – of aspiring, is necessarily connected to financial and material resources.

Advantaged groups have a richer and more extensive "archive of concrete experiments with the good life" in part because they have greater opportunities to experiment with aspiration (Appadurai, 2004, p. 69). They "explore the future more frequently and more realistically, and … share this knowledge with one another more routinely than their poorer and weaker neighbours" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 69). Thus, one's archive of experiences is not simply a record of one's own experiments and what has been learned from these. The archive also includes the experiences of one's broader sociocultural group.

While students' aspirations for HE are enabled by financial and material resources, they are also resourced by their archives of experiences – their social and cultural resources. Research on student aspirations (e.g. Bok, 2010; Sellar et al., 2011; Smith, 2011) identifies reduced access to resources and diminished archives of experience as being significant impediments to aspiration formation and attainment. This reduced capacity to aspire can also lead to adjusted or 'adaptive' preferences (Elster, 1983) for the future, reflecting an acceptance of one's conditions and sense of the possible.

3.7 *Summary*

These six concepts provide different insights into what it means to aspire, in this case, to higher education. Yet they are not 'stand-alone' concepts, without connections with each other. Our collective social imagination of where we 'fit' in relation to others, is closely connected to our sense of taste (i.e. our appreciation of status) and what is seen to be worth aspiring to for someone in our position. Similarly, there is interplay between what we desire

for the future and what we understand to be possible. Our aspirations are not simply ‘blue sky’ dreams. They are formed in relation to the circumstances in which we live. And our capacity to navigate our way towards our aspirations is very much dependent on the resources we are able to drawn on. Of course, these three couplets are also related to each other. The desirable is framed by social imagination and taste, and the possible by navigational capacities and resources.

While these relations are significant, one concept among the six stands out more than the others as central to a robust understanding of aspiration. As Appadurai (2004) suggests, aspiration is fundamentally a navigational capacity. It is not that these capacities are evoked after our aspirations are conceived. They are also involved in the formation of aspirations themselves. To navigate is central to what it means to aspire. It is this notion of navigational capacity that binds together the conceptual framework informing the research in this report.

4| Approach

The research project was conducted in three stages: (i) survey development and refinement, (ii) survey implementation and (iii) data analysis. An overview of these research activities follows, including a brief account of the discrepancies between the approach initially proposed and the changes that occurred throughout the research process.

4.1 *Survey development*

The initial stage of the project aimed to establish the conceptual and methodological tools required for the conduct of the research. This included the design of two surveys: (i) The Australian Survey of Student Aspirations (TASSA) and (ii) The Australian Survey of Co-curricula School Activities (TASSA-C). The surveys were designed to (i) identify the aspirations of Year 9 students at Northern Bay College (NBC) and (ii) gesture towards the influence of the ensemble of co-curricula programs on these students' aspirations.

Previous surveys (e.g. Bowen & Doughney, 2010; James, 2002) have revealed high levels of aspiration for university study by students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. However, these do not articulate conceptions of aspiration beyond an abstract notion of 'desire' or in ways that might assist in the development of a more targeted approach to university outreach programs. In this study, a considerable amount of research literature was consulted in the development of a more nuanced understanding of aspiration to inform the development of the project's surveys and the analysis of data generated from these (see Chapter 3).

The student survey (TASSA) questions were developed using theoretically relevant and age appropriate language for the cohort. Consideration was given to the length of time the survey would take students to complete and the logical progression of the question layout. An initial pilot of the survey was administered, with ethical approval, to 26 students from schools in Central Queensland as part of a separate but related project (see Gale et al., 2013). This process enabled the research team to assess the general ease of use of the survey for students. The potential for analysing the data was also a significant design consideration. For example, the use of Likert Scales limited the survey's use of open-ended, free form questions. This allowed survey respondents to nominate replies on a structured scale of agreement, enabling a more coherent coding for the purposes of data analysis.

The second survey (TASSA-C) was designed to gain insight into the efficacy and limitations of various co-curricula programs in which the schools and their students were engaged. The survey was designed to be completed by school principals or their delegates, rather than students themselves, and sought to inform the project's understanding of the reach, intention and efficacy of the schools' participation in such programs.

Typically, a range of for-profit and not-for-profit educational and community organisations external to the school system operate these programs. The specific objectives and methods employed by these programs are diverse, in terms of the range of activities they offer, though generally they aim to provide students with co-curricular activities designed to promote the value of education and training opportunities following secondary school completion. A number of these programs are expressly designed to raise aspiration for university education and seek to engage with students for whom university education might not appear an obvious or easy future path to navigate.

4.2 *Survey implementation*

Ethical approval to conduct the survey was sought from two bodies with interests in the survey's implementation: (i) Deakin University's Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC), which acted as the primary approver; and (ii) the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Initial approval was sought and provided to survey students with their parents' written consent. A related research project undertaken in Central Queensland, completed in May 2013, illustrated the impracticability of such an approach, with expressed parent consent almost impossible to secure. For example, in one Central Queensland school with a large contingent of students willing to complete the survey, only two students returned a signed parent consent form on the day the survey was scheduled day for the survey to be completed.

Informed by this experience, further application was made to the two ethics committees noted above to vary the implementation of the survey of NBC students so that parental consent could be assumed and students were restricted from participating in the survey only when their parents provided written notice to this effect. Approval was granted on this basis. In addition, the written approval of all NBC campus principals was obtained to allow students in the school to participate and the survey was advertised in the school's newsletter to parents two weeks prior to its implementation.

The survey was administered online in two phases to Year 9 students (71 in the first phase and 41 in the second with 34 students or 47.8% of them being the same students). The intention was to ascertain the nature and extent of the students' aspirations for the future and how these may have changed over time. In the first phase students completed the survey during a single, scheduled visit to the Waurn Ponds campus of Deakin University in April 2013. By arrangement with the University's School of Education's Associate Head (Research), Associate Professor Damian Blake, pre-service teachers enrolled in the Graduate Diploma of Education (Applied Learning) (GDAL) at Deakin assisted NBC students with the completion of the survey, clarifying what was being asked of participants in the context of the survey.

Due to the unavailability of many GDAL pre-service teachers in the latter half of the year, the second phase of the survey was conducted with small groups of NBC students on the school's campus in multiple sittings in October 2013. This process was overseen by Kellie Tobin, the Site Director of the Deakin University / NBC School Centre for Teaching Excellence. Only 41 valid responses were recorded in the second implementation of the survey, 34 of which were from students who also completed the survey in April 2013. Given the length of the survey and the relatively close proximity of its two implementations (approximately six months apart), a significant number of students declined to participate in the survey for a second time. Additionally, the quality of responses was poorer for the second round than the first, evidenced in the number of 'not applicable' and 'I don't know' responses and at least two students not fully completing the survey in the allotted time.

4.3 *Data analysis*

Findings from the survey and their discussion are provided in the following chapter (Chapter 5). It includes statistical, descriptive and content analysis of both quantitative and qualitative survey data, informed by concepts from the research literature (see Chapter 3). Given the above restrictions on the generation of data, comparative analysis between different student population groups (e.g. socioeconomic status groups) and changes across time is considerably restricted.

5| Findings and discussion

This Chapter reports on the findings of a survey of Year 9 students in Northern Bay College using The Australian Survey of Student Aspirations (TASSA) (see Appendix 1). Data generated by the survey – both quantitative and qualitative – were subjected to statistical, descriptive and content analysis. The Chapter focuses on analysis of the quantitative survey data along with analysis of the qualitative data. While the survey features a large number of questions, the analysis was restricted to key items that most directly relate to student aspirations for higher education.

What follows, presents and analyses the data in two main sets: 1) the students who participated in the first sitting of the survey in April; and 2) a comparison of data derived from those students who completed the survey in *both* the April *and* October sittings. The latter data include fewer responses than the former (34 as opposed to 71) as not all students from the first sitting participated in the second.

Sitting 1 – April 2013

5.1 *Survey respondents*

A total of 71 Year 9 students, ranging in age from 13 to 15 years, completed the survey. Of these 71 respondents, 31 (44%) were male and 40 (56%) were female, all of whom were born in Australia (see Table 5.1). Only one respondent indicated that English was not the main language spoken at home. This respondent indicated that the main language spoken in their home was Italian.

Table 5.1: Students by gender – Sitting 1 (April 2013)

	N	%
Male	31	43.7
Female	40	56.3
Total Sitting 1	**71**	**100.0**

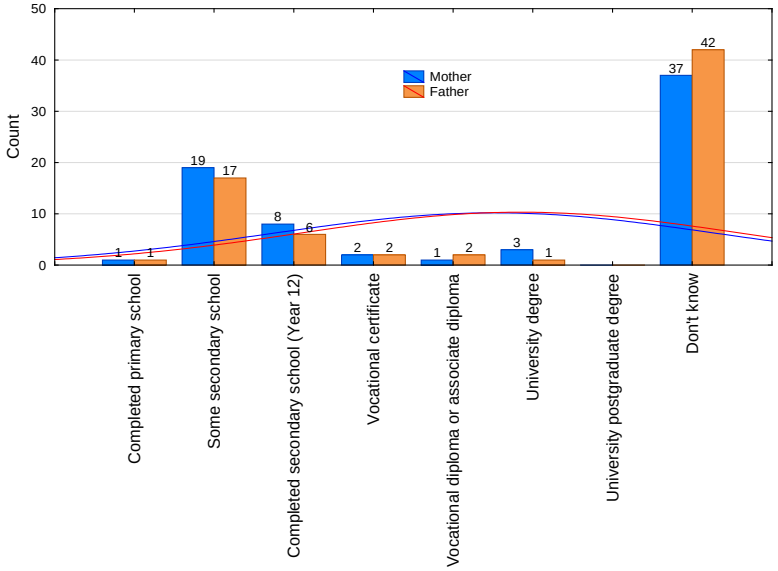
5.2 *Parental educational attainment*

Of those who completed the survey, a small proportion of students' parents were identified as having a university education (three mothers and one father). The most common level of education attainment was 'incomplete high school' (27% of mothers and 24% of fathers); both mothers and fathers had a median education level of 3 (i.e. some secondary school). Significantly, in more than half of all cases (52% for mothers, 59% for fathers), students did not know their parents' educational attainment. See Table 5.2 and Figure 5.1 below.

Table 5.2: Parental educational attainment – Sitting 1

Parental educational attainment	Mother		Father	
	N	%	N	%
Did not attend school	0	0.0	0	0.0
Completed primary school	1	1.4	1	1.4
Some secondary school	19	26.8	17	23.9
Completed secondary school (Year 12)	8	11.3	6	8.5
Vocational certificate	2	2.8	2	2.8
Vocational diploma or associate diploma	1	1.4	2	2.8
University degree	3	4.2	1	1.4
University postgraduate degree	0	0.0	0	0.0
Do not know	37	52.1	42	59.2
Total	**71**	**100.0%**	**71**	**100.0%**

Figure 5.1: Histogram of parental educational attainment



5.3 *Parental occupational status*

Students were asked to indicate the occupations of their mother and father. The responses were then categorised according to the Australian Socioeconomic Index 2006 (AUSIE06), which is based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) (Trewin & Pink 2006).[4]

Almost a quarter (24%) of students did not know their mother's occupation and approximately one-third (34%) did not know their father's occupation. A significant proportion of parents do not work (39% mother, 20% of fathers). Of the parents with known occupations, students' mothers had occupations with a higher mean prestige score than fathers, although this difference was not statistically significant. Parental occupational listed by prestige decile are provided in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Parental Occupation by Prestige Decile

Occupational Prestige Decile	Mother		Father	
	N	%	N	%
Do not Know Parent Occupation	17	24	24	34
Parent Does not Work	28	39	14	20
Less than 10	0	0	4	6
10 - 19.9	1	1	8	11
20 - 29.9	11	15	8	11
30 - 39.9	9	13	8	11
40 - 49.9	0	0	0	0
50 - 59.9	2	3	4	6
60 - 69.9	0	0	0	0
70 - 79.9	0	0	0	0
80 - 89.9	3	4	1	1
90 and above	0	0	0	0
Total	**71**	**100**	**71**	**100**

Other than those not in work or for whom students do not know their occupation, most parents' occupations fell within between the 20th and 40th percentiles, indicating relatively low prestige. Occupations in this range include cleaners, at the lower end, labourers and sales

[4] The AUSIE06 scale ranks occupation types from 0 (least prestigious) to 100 (most prestigious). See http://www.acer.edu.au/ausei06

assistants in the mid-range, and tradespeople and clerical workers clustered around the 40th percentile (Trewin & Pink 2006). While most parents' occupations fell within the same prestige deciles, there was a gender distinction in the types of jobs in which mothers and fathers were employed. A number of students' mothers were identified as working as cleaners or in carer occupations such as age care workers. Fathers were more likely to be employed as drivers, a number were identified as truck drivers and forklift drivers, or as tradesmen or labourers including railway workers and painters.

5.4 *Students' restricted occupational preferences*

From a restricted list of 10 occupations, respondents were asked to order these from highest to lowest according to their preferred occupation. The list comprised two occupations from each decile of the AUSIE06 (Australian Bureau of Statistics rating of occupational prestige), starting from the second decile. The distribution of respondents' highest selected occupation (listed below according to their prestige score, based on the AUSIE06) is shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Highest selected occupational preference and AUSIE06 rating – Sitting 1

Highest Selected Occupation	Male	Female	Total	AUSIE06
Medical doctor	0	7	**7**	**100.0**
Lawyer	2	7	**9**	**90.7**
TAFE Teacher	1	4	**5**	**82.0**
Social worker	2	13	**15**	**80.2**
Information technology support technician	5	3	**8**	**63.6**
Dental technician	0	1	**1**	**58.9**
Aircraft maintenance engineer	16	1	**17**	**41.1**
Data processing operator	2	1	**3**	**39.3**
Storeperson	3	2	**5**	**20.8**
Cleaner	0	1	**1**	**20.4**
Total	**31**	**40**	**71**	**-**

Male students' first preference from the restricted list of occupations tended to be occupations of lower prestige than those chosen by female students. A series of χ^2 tests[5] on each occupation showed that there were significant differences with higher proportions of males than females selecting Aircraft Maintenance Engineer ($\chi^2(1) = 23.13$, $p < .000$). A higher proportion of females selected Medical Doctor ($\chi^2(1) = 6.02$, $p < .02$); and Social Worker ($\chi^2(1) = 7.11$, $p < .01$).

One explanation for the high number of Aircraft Maintenance Engineer responses might be based on the proximity of Avalon Airport to Corio and Geelong. Proximity in relation to Avalon airport is physical but also relates to possibility as the knowledge of nearby employment opportunities may be viewed as aspirational or fitting a concept of a desired future life. This geographic and cultural proximity of the Avalon Heavy Maintenance facility, which also houses Qantas' Engineer maintenance facility, employs approximately 900 people workers[6] and could be regarded by students as a desirable and possible occupation.

These data can also be compared with what respondents *thought* was required to enter these occupations.[7] Table 5.5 also shows that just over half (56.7%) agreed or strongly agreed with

[5] A χ^2 test or chi-squared test is a distribution based test that measures how likely it is that the data observed could have occurred randomly or that the data represents a random sample.

[6] See http://www.avalonairport.com.au/corporate/doing-business-with-avalon/maintenance/

[7] These data are derived from students' responses to the question: 'If you were to get to do your first preference, what things between now and then would you need to do?'.

the statement that they need to go to TAFE to achieve their aspirations, while 68.1% indicated that they would need to go to university (see Appendix 3 for more detail of these data). These perceptions of what qualifications are needed are substantially higher than the education and training students actually require in order to obtain entry into their preferred occupation, with around half of all students selecting an occupation that requires university (50.7%) or TAFE (47.9%). This suggests that students have an inflated, inaccurate view of the education required to qualify for their desired career. Table 5.5 also illustrates that a much higher proportion of female students than males indicated a preference for occupations requiring university education (77.5% of females as opposed to 16.1% of males). The opposite was true for occupations requiring TAFE, a post-school training option selected by 84% of males but only 20% of females.[8]

Table 5.5: First preference occupation and required qualifications, by gender – Sitting 1

	Occupation preference requires university		**Occupation preference requires TAFE***	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Male	5	16.1	26	83.9
Female	31	77.5	8	20.0
Total	**36**	**50.7**	**34**	**47.9**
	Perceived need to go to university to obtain occupation**		**Perceived need to go to TAFE to obtain occupation**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Male	18	58.1	19	63.3
Female	29	76.3	19	51.4
Total	**47**	**68.1**	**38**	**56.7**

*One female selected *Cleaner* as first preference which requires neither university nor TAFE
***Agree or strongly agree to need to go to TAFE / Uni for first occupation preference*

5.5 *Students' unrestricted occupational preferences*

Students were also provided with an opportunity to indicate their own occupational preferences, without restrictions placed on the occupations selected. These were coded according to AUSIE06 deciles. Figure 5.2 provides a comparison of respondents' restricted and unrestricted occupational preferences. Students' unrestricted occupational preferences had a median result of 60 while their restricted occupational preferences had a median score of 90.

A Wilcoxon matched pairs test[9] performed on the data shows a significant difference between the two ratings ($z = 4.24$, $p < .000$) such that respondents chose more 50th, 90th and 100th percentile ranked occupations when selecting from a restricted range of occupations but more 30th and 40th percentile occupations when free to choose any occupation. Popular occupations within these 30th and 40th percentiles occupations included bricklayer (36.4%), childcare worker (37.3%), and personal trainer (49.6%). That is, when free to state their preferred occupation without restriction, students tended to select occupations of a lower status than when required to select from a predetermined list.

Female students' occupation preferences, in both the restricted and unrestricted choice questions, were in a significantly higher prestige percentile than males. This was especially noticeable for the restricted choice question – than it was in the unrestricted choice question.

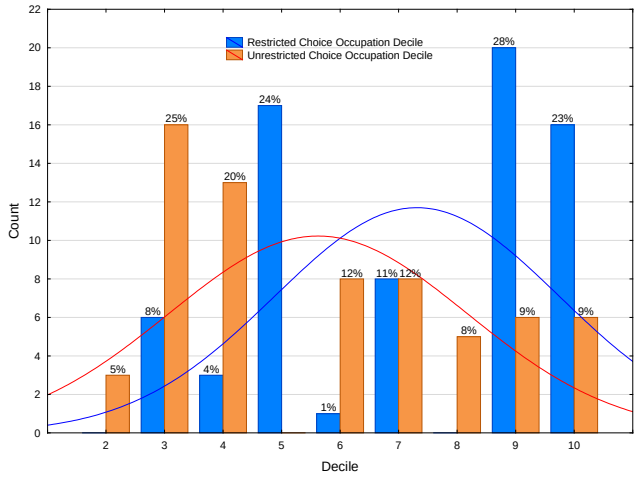
[8] A number of students provided a N/A response for these questions: two females for the question relating to perceived need to go to university; three females and one male for TAFE. These have been excluded from the data in Table 5.5.

[9] The Wilcoxon matched pairs test is used when comparing two related samples, matched samples, or repeated measurements on a single sample to assess whether their population mean ranks differ.

For example, of the three students who wanted to be personal trainers, two were male. However, only female students wished to become teachers (the more prestigious occupation) and three of these students expressed an interest in becoming physical education teachers. While both occupations could in some senses be regarded as similar, female students were drawn to the more prestigious position that also required a higher level of education.

This gendered difference was also evident in the students' answers to the open-ended occupation preference question. For example, a common preference for female students was nursing whereas among male students mechanic was a popular choice for a preferred future occupation.

Figure 5.2: Histograms of restricted versus unrestricted occupational preference as per AUSIE06 decile rating of occupational prestige.



5.6 *Students'* desire *to have a university degree*

The survey also posed the question: 'In the future, when you are the same age as your parents or guardians are now, what would you LIKE TO have or own?' The discussion here is limited to responses that referred to: 'a university degree'.

In the first sitting of the survey, 70.4% of students indicated an aspiration for university (either agreed or disagreed with the statement). A greater proportion of females (75%) expressed this desire than males (64.5%). More than three times the number of female students than male students stated that they strongly agreed with the statement (19 as opposed to 6) as per Table 5.6 ($\chi^2(1) = 6.06$, $p < .05$). This strong indication of aspiration for higher education is consistent with other surveys of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g. Bowden & Doughney 2010).

Table 5.6: Students' desire for a university degree by gender – Sitting 1

Aspire to a university degree	Male		Female		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	6	19.4	19	47.5	**25**	**35.2**
Agree	14	45.2	11	27.5	**25**	**35.2**
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9	29.0	10	25.0	**19**	**26.8**
Disagree	2	6.5	0	0.0	**2**	**2.8**
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0	**0**	**0.0**
Total	**31**	**100.0**	**40**	**100.0**	**71**	**100.0**

While student desires for a university education were apparent, the rationale for why the destination was desirable was less clear. Often students would respond to the question 'will going to university help your ideas about the future come true', with an explanation that university is a key to successful employment. For example, "It might help me get a better chance for me to get to my future job" was a common response. Those students who did not aspire to university tended to be clearer in their reasons why they did not view it as a desirable option. For example, one student responded: "i can be a childcare worker going to TAFE"; another "because i could go to tafe"; and another "don't need a degree for what i want to do." The difference in recognition of why a university is not a desirable element in their future may represent a stronger understanding of the requirements of non-university pathways towards employment. For students from this school, it may represent an increased capacity to navigate non-university opportunities as they are similar to the experiences of those around them. Similarly, students demonstrating a desire for university do so with less clarity in their justifications or goals. This is possibly related to their capacity to navigate towards tertiary education with an understanding of the possibilities it can afford them.

5.7 *Students'* anticipation *of having a university degree*

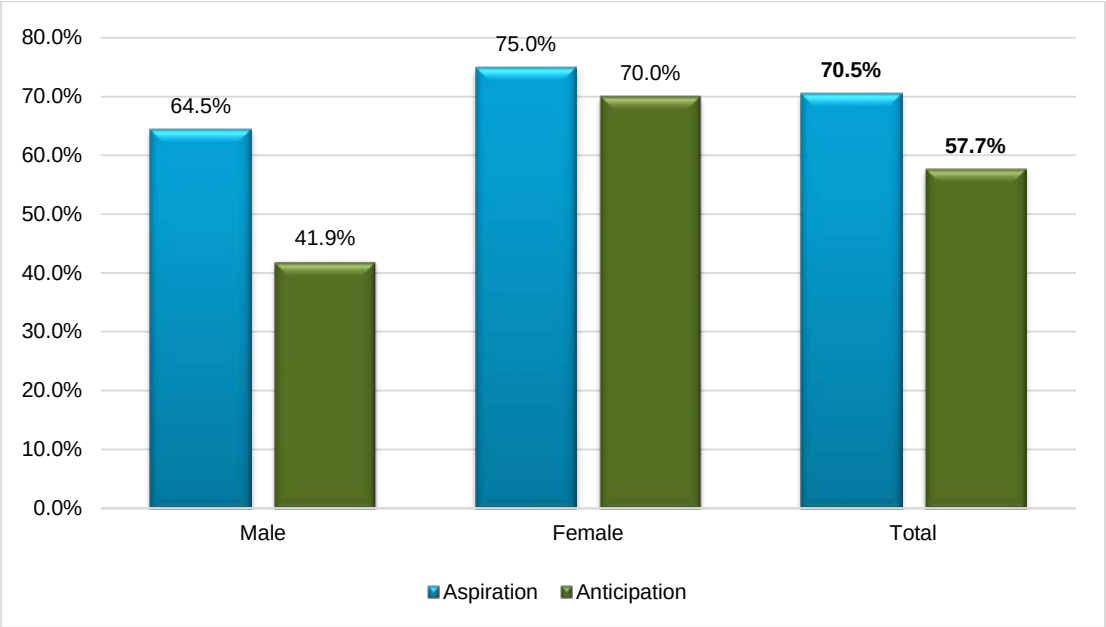
Complementing the above question, students were also asked: 'In the future, when you are the same age as your parents or guardians are now, what WILL you have or own?' The discussion here is limited to responses that noted: 'a university degree'.

Overall, fewer students indicated that they anticipated gaining a university degree than aspired to having one; 57.7% of students in the April survey held this anticipation (agreed or strongly agree). A Wilcoxon test showed that this difference between aspiration and expectation was significant ($z = 3.23$, $p =< .01$). However, this difference between desire (LIKE TO) and possibility (WILL) was greater for males (41.9% anticipating holding a degree) than for females (70%). See Table 5.7 and Figure 5.3. Again, this difference is consistent with other similar studies (e.g. Gale et al. 2013).

Table 5.7: Students' anticipation of getting a university degree, by gender – Sitting 1

Aspire to a university degree	Male		Female		All	
	N	%	**N**	%	**N**	**%**
Strongly Agree	5	16.1	9	22.5	**14**	**19.7**
Agree	8	25.8	19	47.5	**27**	**38.0**
Neither Agree nor Disagree	14	45.2	9	22.5	**23**	**32.4**
Disagree	4	12.9	3	7.5	**7**	**9.9**
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0	**0**	**0.0**
Total	**31**	**100.0**	**40**	**100.0**	**71**	**100.0**

Figure 5.3: Aspiration for and anticipation of a university degree



5.8 *University, field of study choices and the TAFE alternative*

University choice

When asked what university they'd like to go to if they decided to do so,, seven students said that they did not plan to go to university and 23 had not made a decision about which university they would like to go. The data suggests that most students select a university to attend based on its geographic proximity to their current residence, with Deakin University the university of choice for 37 respondents (the highest response for any university chosen). This is understandable given NBC's relationship with Deakin and possibly also because the survey was undertaken at a Deakin University campus. The next most commonly chosen university was the University of Melbourne, a Group of Eight institution and the most prestigious in Victoria. This suggests recognition of status or taste and an understanding of the university to which they 'ought' to aspire. This point is reinforced by the fact that other than one student's preference for the University of Ballarat, no other Victorian university was selected despite the survey presenting all nine Victorian-based universities as options (see Appendix 1 for details of the specific survey question).[10] It is also clear that while many students stated plans to go to university, they were unable to articulate preferred institution. Respondents' university choices by gender are shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8: University choice by gender – Sitting 1

	Male		Female		All	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Deakin University	19	61.3	18	45.0	**37**	52.1
University of Melbourne	0	0.0	3	7.5	**3**	4.2
University of Ballarat	0	0.0	1	2.5	**1**	1.4
I don't know	8	25.8	14	37.5	**23**	3.4
I don't plan on going to university	4	12.9	3	7.5	**7**	9.9
All Groups	**31**	**100.0**	**40**	**100.0**	**71**	**100.0**

[10] Respondents were asked to choose from a list of all nine Victorian universities, but also had the choice of 'I don't know' and 'I don't plan on going to university' and the option to specify an option not on the list.

Indicating a preferred university should not always be taken to mean that a student holds aspirations for university, nor is it a demonstration of a student's capacity to navigate the pathways towards higher education. For example, of the three students who indicated a desire to attend the University of Melbourne only one demonstrated an aspiration to enrol in a course (Law) that correlated with his 'unrestricted' occupation choice (lawyer). The remaining two responses indicated a preference to attend the University of Melbourne but this did not reflect the students' desired occupations (childcare worker and air hostess). Importantly, for these students the preference to attend this university was not based on a sense of confusion or lack of navigational capacity as both students recognised that their career aspirations did not require a university qualification ("i can be a childcare worker going to TAFE" and "for an air hostess you only need to go to year 12 for VCE's."). As noted above, the stated preference for the University of Melbourne may also indicate that students recognise the 'best' university based on prestige, status and taste. Even though these students do not aspire to higher education, they understand the 'right' answer to the question they are being asked.

A similar pattern emerged with students who demonstrated a desire to attend Deakin University, a university with a campus in the region. Many of these students displayed a disconnect between their unrestricted job preferences and preferred university. More specifically, while the students indicated a desire to attend university, they did so with an aspiration for occupations that do not require university qualifications. While 37 (52%) students suggested they would like to attend Deakin University, 19 of these stated a preference for an occupation that does not require a university qualification. As noted, many of these students expressed a desire to become personal trainers, carpenters, builders and mechanics. This strong preference for Deakin as the university of choice may reflect both (i) that institution's presence in both NBC and the Geelong area more generally and (ii) students' sense that this is the university that they would be expected to choose.

Field of study choice

When considering students' preferred field of study, responses are once again gendered (see Table 5.9). As per previous studies (AAUW, 2010; Mavriplis et al., 2010; OECD, 2011), males selected engineering ($\chi^2(1) = 3.87$, $p < .05$), architecture ($\chi^2(1) = 9.60$, $p < .01$) and business ($\chi^2(1) = 5.92$, $p < .05$) more frequently than did female respondents. Similarly, females select health ($\chi^2(1) = 4.04$, $p < .05$) and creative arts ($\chi^2(1) = 5.80$, $p < .05$) more than males.

Table 5.9: Field of study by gender – Sitting 1 (April 2013)

Field of Study	Gender		All	
	Male	Female	N	%
Creative arts and music	0	7	**7**	**12.3**
Engineering, surveying	7	3	**10**	**17.5**
Veterinary science	0	1	**1**	**1.8**
Architecture, building	8	1	**9**	**15.8**
Agriculture, animal husbandry	0	2	**2**	**3.5**
Arts, humanities and social sciences	0	3	**3**	**5.3**
Science	2	2	**4**	**7.0**
Education	0	2	**2**	**3.5**
Health	2	10	**12**	**21.1**
Law, legal studies	1	2	**3**	**5.3**
Medicine	0	0	**0**	**0.0**
Business, administration, economics	4	0	**4**	**7.0**
All Groups	**24**	**33**	**57**	**100.0**

University and TAFE comparisons

Students were asked if they would consider going to TAFE instead of university: 25.4% of all students said they would. While only 16.9% would *not* consider going to TAFE instead of university, over half (57.7%) indicated that they did not know. A greater proportion of males than females indicated they did not know, suggesting a higher degree of certainty among girls than boys about their preferred education destination. While about one quarter of both males and females stated that they would consider TAFE, females seem more adamant that they would not consider it as an option (22.5% as opposed to 9.7% of males).[11] See Table 5.10.

Table 5.10: Would you consider going to TAFE instead of university? – Sitting 1

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Yes	8	25.8	10	25.0	18	25.4
No	3	9.7	9	22.5	12	16.9
Don't know	20	64.5	21	52.5	41	57.7
Total	**31**	**100.0**	**40**	**100.0**	**71**	**100.0**

As a follow-up question, participants were asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- I don't know what TAFE is
- University and TAFE are the same
- You learn more at university
- TAFE is more practical
- I plan to go to TAFE instead of university because TAFE is closer to my home
- Universities give you more subject choices
- TAFE doesn't have what I want to study
- Other, please specify.

Students' responses suggest that university is considered a destination to be desired over TAFE, providing greater subject choice and a better opportunity to learn. The most favoured reason to select a TAFE post-school education is based on the perception that it more practically focused.

Table 5.11: Reasons for considering TAFE – Sitting 1

Agree or strongly agree	**Would NOT consider TAFE**		**Would consider TAFE**		**Don't Know**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
I don't know what TAFE is	1	11.1	2	11.8	13	33.3
University and TAFE are the same	0	0.0	3	16.6	2	5.1
You learn more at university	9	75.0	5	27.8	10	25.7
TAFE is more practical	2	18.2	9	50.0	5	13.5
I plan to go to TAFE instead of university because TAFE is closer to my home	0	0.0	1	5.5	1	2.9
Universities give you more subject choices	10	83.3	8	44.4	15	39.8
TAFE doesn't have what I want to study	7	58.3	1	5.9	3	9.1

Excludes N/A responses

[11] Compare this with other similar studies where the choice of TAFE or university was different between males and females; Gale et al. 2013.

5.9 *Resourcing aspirations for post-secondary education*

When asked about where they would get information about post school options, five options emerged: university/TAFE, parents/family, teachers/school, friends, internet and other. Table 5.12 (below) shows these data, disaggregated by gender.

Table 5.12: Sources of information, by gender

	Male (31)		Female (40)		All (71)	
	N	**% of M***	**N**	**% of F**	**N**	**% of All**
University/TAFE	4	12.9	2	5.0	**6**	**8.5**
Parents/family	12	38.7	18	45.0	**30**	**42.3**
Teachers/school	17	54.8	17	42.5	**34**	**47.9**
Friends	3	9.7	5	12.5	**8**	**11.3**
Internet	5	16.1	9	22.5	**14**	**19.7**
Other	4	12.9	5	12.5	**9**	**12.7**
Don't know	3	9.7	5	12.5	**8**	**11.3**

** % totals more than 100 as students could select more than one response*

Nearly half of all students (48%) reported that they would seek information from their teachers or school. Equal numbers of males and females (17) selected this option as a source of information, although a greater proportion were male (55%) than female (43%). The next most common source of information was parents and family, chosen by 42% of all students (39% of males, 45% of females). Notably, only 8.5% of students indicated that they would seek information from university or TAFE institutions directly, with more than twice the proportion of males than females suggesting that they would seek information from these sources (13% and 5% respectively).

With regard to the 'other' responses (12.7%), some students recognised the benefits of other people's experiences and how they might assist them in achieving their aspirations. For example, students claimed they would seek "a person that has finished school and have a good education" or "people who have successfully completed school" for information about their aspirations in education. However, in the context of a region where participation and completion of tertiary education has been low, finding these resources might be difficult. Thus, while turning to someone close to them for information might seem a reasonable choice for these students, in the context of navigating towards university it suggests potential limitations inherent in these resources from which students have to draw.

Given the experiences of students within the *Aspire* and similar programs, held on university campuses, it is unsurprising that 60.6% of respondents state that they have visited a university (Table 5.13). When asked what other experiences students have had with universities, twelve students recognised their involvement in the *Aspire* program with a further four respondents possibly recognising their involvement in the program (one responding 'just visiting', and three responding 'science'). There may have been some confusion or misunderstanding about educational pathways and the distinction between universities and vocational institutions that also provide pathways to universities. Two students stated that they had visited the Gordon Institute, a local TAFE institution. While these students are technically incorrect – the Gordon Institute is a TAFE, not a university – they may have had in mind the courses on offer – including degrees – at Gordon that articulate into study options at Deakin University.[12]

[12] See http://www.thegordon.edu.au/Courses/PathwaysToUniversity/Pages/PathwaysToDeakinUniversity.aspx

Table 5.13: Have you ever been to a university, by gender – Sitting 1

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	23	74.2	20	50.0	**43**	**60.6**
No	8	25.8	17	42.5	**25**	**35.2**
Don't Know	0	0.0	3	7.5	**3**	**4.2**
Total	**31**	**100.0**	**40**	**100.0**	**71**	**100.0**

Very few students indicated they had any experience of a university environment outside of the *Aspire* program. Of those that responded to the question, two recognised visits to their school by university staff and one drew on their experience of university gleaned through popular culture ('TV Movies'). Only one student was able to explain that their experiences with university have been informed directly by other family members ('my brother has visited the uni and told me about the science and what he worked on'). That so few students were able to acknowledge access to such resources is not unexpected given that less than one-fifth (19.7%) of students had a brother or sister who had attended university.

Parents/guardians and teachers

When asked how important the views of parents or guardians were to planning respondents' futures, 85% of all respondents said it was important or extremely important. Responses by gender are recorded in Table 5.14. Only 16% were neutral about the statement or did not regard it as important.

Table 5.14: Parents'/guardians' views by gender – Sitting 1

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Extremely important	8	25.8	12	30.0	**20**	**28.2**
Important	19	61.3	21	52.5	**40**	**56.3**
Neither important nor unimportant	4	12.9	6	15.0	**10**	**14.1**
Unimportant	0	0.0	1	2.5	**1**	**1.4**
Definitely not important	0	0.0	0	0.0	**0**	**0.0**
Total	**31**	**100.0**	**40**	**100.0**	**71**	**100.0**

Student perceptions of their parents' views on education ("Does anyone in your family think it would be good for you to go to university") were often described in terms of an assumed benefit of university education for achieving a better life. A typical response from students was that their parents wanted them to succeed in life and, in order for them do so, attending university would be a requirement. For example, one student acknowledged their parents' desire for them to go to university, explaining: "they want me to do better then them because they regret not going all the way through school and they want me to be the first in our family to successed."

Table 5.15 reflects this, indicating that two-thirds of students had someone in their family who thought going to university would be good for them. However, significantly more students (particularly males) indicated that they did not know if anyone in their family thought that university would be good for them. This was higher for females (75%) than males (58%). More students did not know the answer to this question than answered in the negative.

Table 5.15: Does anyone in your family think it would be good for you to go to university, by gender – Sitting 1

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Yes	18	58.1	30	75.0	**48**	**67.6**
No	0	0.0	1	2.5	**1**	**1.4**
Don't Know	13	41.9	9	22.5	**22**	**31.0**
Total	**31**	**100.0**	**40**	**100.0**	**71**	**100.0**

When asked how important the views of teachers were to planning respondents' future, 73% of all respondents said it was important or extremely important. Responses tabulated by gender are represented in Table 5.16. In contrast with parental views, over a quarter (27%) regarded teachers' views as being either neutral or unimportant/not important. A matched samples test performed on the data showed that parents'/guardians' views were seen as more important than teachers' views; $t(70) = 3.25$, $p < .01$.

Table 5.16: Teachers' views by gender – Sitting 1

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Extremely important	4	12.9	6	15.0	**10**	**14.1**
Important	20	64.5	22	55.0	**42**	**59.2**
Neither important nor unimportant	6	19.4	9	22.5	**15**	**21.1**
Unimportant	0	0.0	3	7.5	**3**	**4.2**
Definitely not important	1	3.2	0	0.0	**1**	**1.4**
Total	**31**	**100.0**	**40**	**100.0**	**71**	**100.0**

The data from other survey questions further illustrate the extent of parental influence on the students' occupational aspirations. There is a strong correlation between the unrestricted occupational choice of respondents and the occupation the parents would like their child to have ($r_t(31) = 0.73$, $p < .001$). That is what students thought their parents would like them do as an occupation was closely associated with the open occupation responses they gave.

5.10 *Trust*

Students were asked: 'What makes you trust the advice about the future from some people more than others?' and to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- I trust people who I know well
- I trust people who have experience of these kinds of things
- I trust people who are in positions of authority
- I trust people who have qualifications in these kind of things
- Other, please specify.

When asked about what sources of information they trusted most, the overwhelming majority (94.4%) of students stated that they either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they trust people they know well. Equally trusted (86% of all students) were those with experience and qualifications in the relevant matters. Males were more likely to trust those in positions of authority and those with qualifications, while females tended to trust those they know and those with experience. See Table 5.17 below.

Table 5.17: Trusted sources of information – Sitting 1

Agree or Strongly Agree	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I trust people I know well	28	96.8	37	92.5	**67**	**94.4**
I trust people who have experience of these kinds of things	26	83.9	35	87.5	**61**	**85.9**
I trust people who are in positions of authority	22	71.0	24	60.0	**46**	**64.8**
I trust people who have qualifications in these kind of things	27	87.1	34	85.0	**61**	**85.9**

Another way of putting this is that students are more likely to seek information and advice from those closest to them (family, friends and others they know well) than from those who may have more knowledge of, experience with, or qualifications in post-school options and pathways.

Sitting Comparisons – April and October 2013

5.11 *Survey Respondents*

Although 71 students participated in the first 'sitting' of the survey (in April 2013), only 41 participated the second time (in October 2013). Of these, only 34 students completed the survey on both occasions. The following data are based on a comparison of these 34 student responses. Table 5.18, below, shows the gender distribution of these 34 students, revealing that a slightly higher proportion of females in the second sitting than among the 71 who participated in initial sitting (59% vs. 56%).

Table 5.18: Gender

	N	%
Male	14	41.2
Female	20	58.8
Total Comparison	**34**	**100.0**

5.12 *Students' restricted occupational preferences*

The same 10 occupations were presented to the respondents to order according to their preferences, as in Section 5.4. The distribution of respondents' highest selected occupation (listed below according to their prestige score, based on the AUSIE06) is shown in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19: Restricted occupational choice by gender – Comparison

Highest Selected Occupation	April		October		AUSIE06
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Medical doctor	0	3	0	1	100.0
Lawyer	1	4	2	4	90.7
TAFE Teacher	0	2	0	0	82.0
Social worker	2	7	0	7	80.2
Information technology support technician	2	3	2	4	63.6
Dental technician	0	0	0	1	58.9
Aircraft maintenance engineer	8	0	8	1	41.1
Data processing operator	1	0	0	0	39.3
Storeperson	0	1	2	1	20.8
Cleaner	0	0	0	1	20.4
Total	**14**	**20**	**14**	**20**	**-**

In the first sitting, males selected less prestigious occupations than females as their highest selected restricted choice. A series of χ^2 tests on each occupation showed that there were significant differences recorded, with higher proportions of males than females selecting

Aircraft Maintenance Engineer ($\chi^2(1) = 14.95$, $p < .000$). This was a similar result to the response of the entire group of 71 students who participated in the first sitting. In the second sitting, once again males selected less prestigious occupations than females. The χ^2 tests on each occupation showed again that there were statistically significant gender differences with higher proportions of males than females selecting Aircraft Maintenance Engineer ($\chi^2(1) = 11.50$, $p < .000$). Conversely, a higher proportion of females selected Social Worker ($\chi^2(1) = 6.07$, $p < .05$). There was no statistical difference between the first and second sittings in the scores relating to occupational prestige.

In the April sitting, more than half of the students (55.9%) selected as a first preference occupations that require a university degree. The remaining 44.1% selected occupations requiring TAFE qualifications (Table 5.20). In contrast, by October the majority of student's (55.9%) highest occupational preference required TAFE, with only 41.2% preferring occupations that require degrees. One female indicated that they wanted to be a cleaner, an occupation requiring neither TAFE nor university qualifications (Table 5.20). Once again these data suggest a shift away from aspiring to higher education and towards vocational education and occupations with lower prestige. As an example, fewer students wanted to be medical doctors in October (1 student compared to 3 students in April) and more wanted to be storepersons (3 students compared to 1 student in the first sitting).

These data can also be compared with what respondents *thought* was required to obtain these occupations to provide an insight into students' recognition of the post-secondary education environment. In the April sitting, students generally over-estimated the degree of qualifications required for a given occupation. For example, while just over half (55.9%) indicated a preference for an occupation that requires a university degree, two-thirds (67.6%) were under the impression that going to university was required to achieve these occupations. The figures are similar for jobs requiring TAFE qualifications (44.1% vs. 61.3%). This over-estimation is more marked for male respondents than for females particularly in relation to university. Furthermore, males tended to select occupations requiring TAFE qualifications (78.6%), while the reverse was true for university, with 80% of females selecting occupations that need a degree. See Table 5.20.

Table 5.20: First preference occupation and required qualifications, by gender – April

	Occupation preference requires university		**Occupation preference requires TAFE**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Male	3	21.4	11	78.6
Female	16	80.0	4	10.0
Total	**19**	**55.9**	**15**	**44.1**
	Perceived need to go to university to obtain occupation[#]		**Perceived need to go to TAFE to obtain occupation**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Male	10	71.4	12	85.7
Female	13	65.0	7	41.2
Total	**23**	**67.6**	**19**	**61.3**

[#]3 females recorded N/A responses to this question

By the October sitting there was a much closer alignment between need for and perception of the need for different levels of qualifications. Overall, approximately 40% of students both selected occupations requiring university and felt that a degree was needed to attain them. However, disaggregation by gender shows that males were still over-estimating the qualifications needed (14.3% and 41.7%) while females *under*-estimated (60% and 45%). Almost the reverse was true regarding TAFE with females again correctly assuming that TAFE qualifications were needed (35% and 52.3%) with 85.8% of males selecting these as

the necessary training required, and only 40% perceiving this to be so. Again, male respondents showed a clear preference for occupations requiring TAFE qualifications, while female respondents nominated university. See Table 5.21.

Table 5.21: First preference occupation and required qualifications, by gender – October

	Occupation preference requires university		Occupation preference requires TAFE	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Male	2	14.3	12	85.8
Female	12	60.0	7*	35.0
Total	**14**	**41.2**	**19**	**55.9**
	Perceived need to go to university to obtain occupation[#]		**Perceived need to go to TAFE to obtain occupation[~]**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Male	5	41.7	4	40.0
Female	9	45.0	9	52.3
Total	**14**	**43.8**	**13**	**48.1**

*One female indicated a preference to be a cleaner, an occupation requiring neither TAFE nor university qualifications

[#]2 males recorded N/A responses to this question

[~]4 males and 3 females recorded N/A responses to this question

5.13 *Students'* desire *to have a university degree*

Table 5.22 indicates a notable shift (from April to October) in students' university aspirations. While over two-thirds (67.6%) of students in the April sitting either agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to have a degree in the future, this dropped to 62.5% in October. Importantly, two students responded with 'not applicable' in October. It is unclear if this is because they were not engaged with the survey or if they genuinely regarded university as not applicable to them. When these students' responses are included in the overall October data, it becomes apparent that the proportion of students who agreed that university was in their future dropped to 58.8%. More students (15.6%) in October disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would like to have a degree than in April (5.9%).

Table 5.22: Students' desire for a university degree – Comparison

Aspire to a university degree	April		October	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Strongly Agree	13	38.2	11	34.4
Agree	10	29.4	9	28.1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9	26.5	7	21.9
Disagree	2	5.9	4	12.5
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	1	3.1
Total	**34**	**100.0**	**32***	**100.0**

**Two students provided a 'Not Applicable' response to this question*

Table 5.23 also show that fewer students in October anticipated having a degree than in April, with slightly over half (53.3%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. As with the question relating to university aspirations, some students (4 in this case) responded to this question with 'not applicable'. When these are included in the total, the proportion of students expecting to have a degree dropped to less than half (47.1%). Of the 34 students who completed the survey in October, four disagreed that they would have a university degree with 10 neither agreeing nor disagreeing. These data suggest a general shift away from both wanting and expecting a university education in the future. This is illustrated in Figure 5.4.

Table 5.23: Aspiration for and anticipation of a university degree. Comparison of April and October

Agree and Strongly Agree	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Aspire to a university degree	23	67.6	20*	62.5
Anticipate having a university degree	20	58.8	16**	53.3

**Two students provided a 'Not Applicable' response to this question, therefore n=32*
***Four students provided a 'Not Applicable' response to this question, therefore n=30*
With N/A responses included these figures are 58.8% and 47.1% respectively

Figure 5.4: Aspiration for and anticipation of a university degree. Comparison of April and October

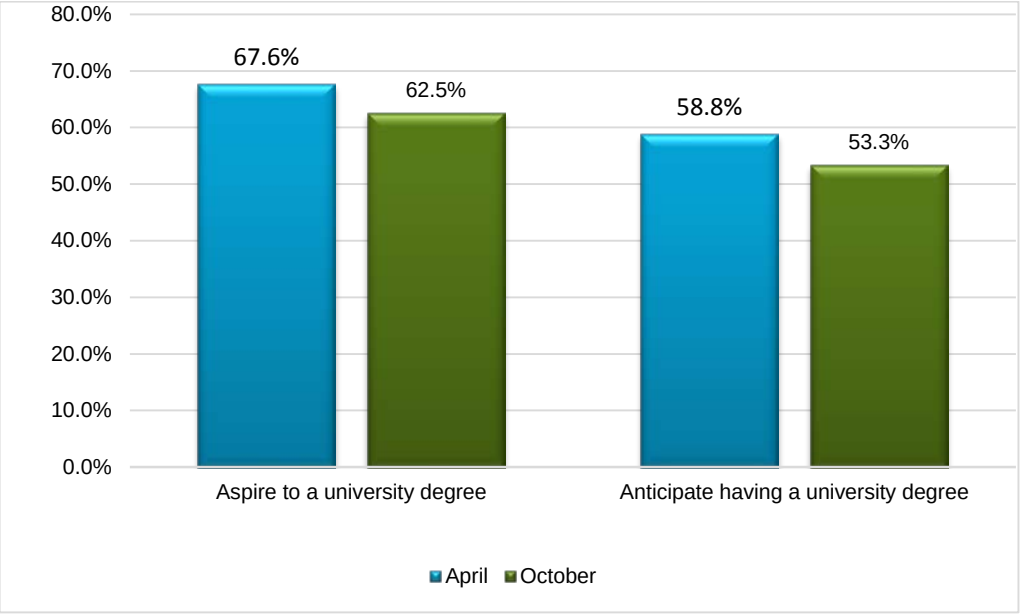
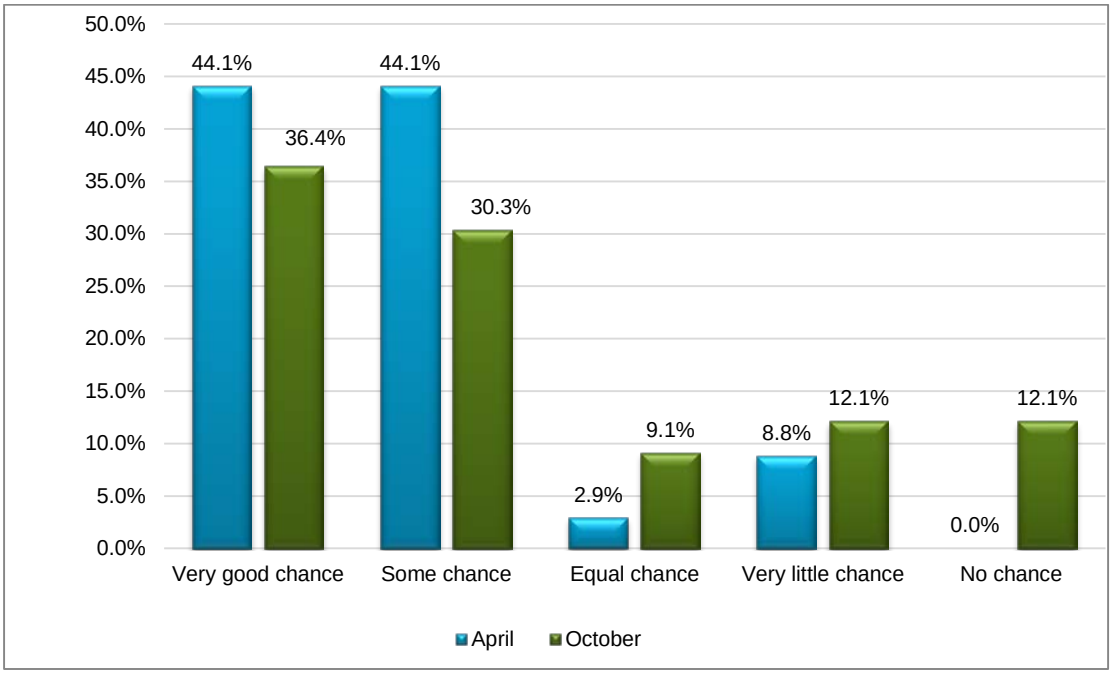


Figure 5.5 below suggests that students had less belief that university would help them to achieve their aspirations for the future. In April, 88.2% thought that there was either some chance or a good chance of university helping them to achieve their future. By October, this was 66.7%, while 24.2% thought there was little to no chance that university would help (compared with only 8.8% in April).

These shift in students' attitudes towards higher education are difficult to explain. It may be that student have 'adapted' their preferences (Elster, 1983) to suit what they believe to be possible for them given their reading of their social conditions and environment. It may also be the case that the students have greater awareness and knowledge of the pathways required to reach their desired aspirations. However, the data below also suggest that students have become disinterested in their futures and eschew post-secondary education altogether.

Figure 5.5: Going to university will help future come true



5.14 *University, field of study choices and the TAFE alternative*

University choice

Between the April and October sittings, students changed their view on which university they wanted to attend. Table 5.24 shows a 50% decrease in the selection of Deakin University (from 18 to 9) with more respondents either not planning to go to university or not sure of which university they want to attend.

The data suggest greater uncertainty among the students, evident in the increase in selection of "I don't know" and in "I don't plan on going to university" responses between April and October. Half as many respondents indicated a preference for Deakin University in the second sitting of the survey than the first. As with the April sitting, the next most common institution selected was the University of Melbourne, indicating a recognition of what is deemed desirable and tasteful in the context of higher education. The prevalence of the University of Ballarat suggests that students have a desire to go to institutions in regional areas similar to where they currently reside.

Table 5.24: University choice – Comparison

	April		October	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Deakin University	18	52.9	9	27.3
University of Melbourne	2	2.9	3	9.1
University of Ballarat	1	5.9	2	6.1
Australian Catholic University	0	0.0	1	3.0
I don't know	8	23.5	11	33.3
I don't plan on going to university	4	11.8	6	18.2
Other	1	2.9	1	3.0
All Groups	**34**	**100.0**	**33**	**100.0**

Some students were clear and consistent in matching their desires for a degree from specific universities with the occupations they desired. For example, a student who wanted to be a

nurse and to study at the University of Ballarat, indicated these preferences in both surveys because “what I want to become needs a nursing degree so I need to go to university to get a nursing degree”. Others altered their desired university destination, seemingly based on an increased navigational capacity. For example, a student who demonstrated a desire to become an engineer (“because i need a good education to be able to get the job i want”) had identified Deakin University as a destination that would allow for this to be achieved. By the second sitting the student had retained the same occupational desire, suggesting that going to university would grant them “a good education (which) will help me get the job i would like and i need the right qualifications”, but changed their preferred post-school destination to the University of Melbourne. Reponses such as this show that in navigating their way to university, some students have the ability to shift and change as they become aware of the alternative opportunities.

However, others presented a more confused concept of how or why they viewed university as a desirable option. For example, one of the students who, in the April sitting round, expressed a desire to attend the University of Melbourne did not have a clear unrestricted occupation choice (“dunno”). The increase of “don’t know” responses from 23.5% in the first sitting to 33.3% by the second could be a demonstration of a gap in the navigational capacity of students from low SES backgrounds that increases when more knowledge of higher education is required. Representative of this was one student’s claim that “university is a great way to start a pathway to a career that you might like to do in the future” but one which she could not specifically identify at present. By demonstrating an understanding of what university may provide for them but not being able to articulate a preferred university, this student demonstrates a limited capacity to navigate towards higher education. The capacity to navigate may be limited for a number of reasons. These can include a lack of resources that distinguish different universities, limited personal experiences, limited ‘peer’ experience, or a lack of understanding about the university environment.

Field of study choice

The choice of university course also changed between testing sessions and only the four respondents who chose engineering and surveying were consistent. The respondent choices are displayed in Table 5.25.

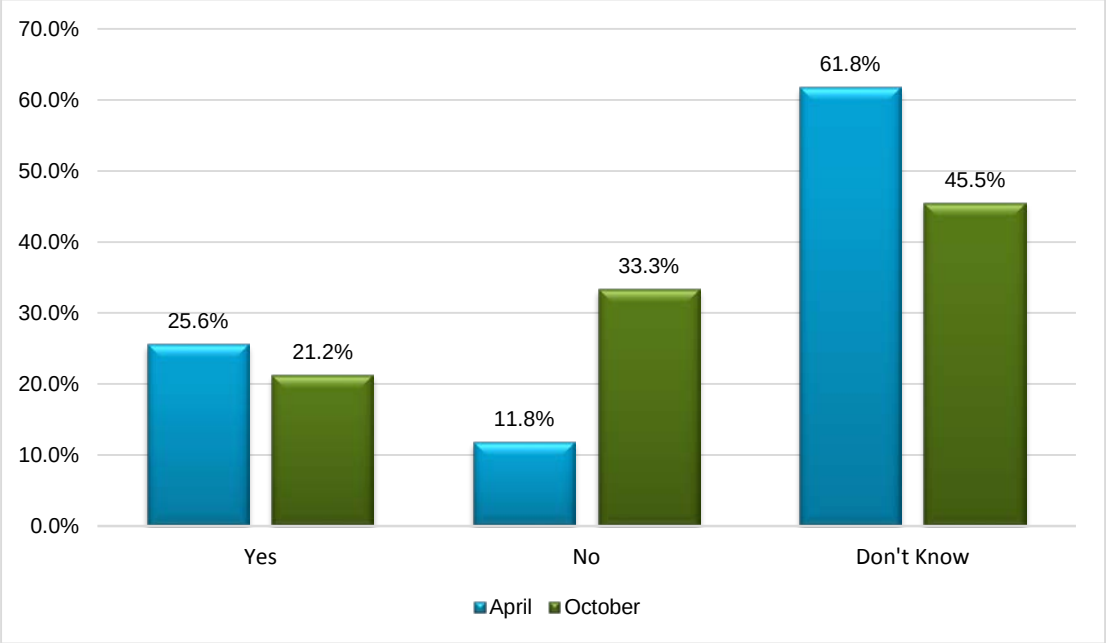
Table 5.25: University course choice – Comparison

Field of Study	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Agriculture, animal husbandry	0	0.0	0	0.0
Architecture, building	5	14.7	1	2.9
Arts, humanities and social sciences	1	2.9	5	14.7
Business, administration, economics	2	5.9	1	2.9
Creative arts and music	4	11.8	0	0.0
Education	1	2.9	2	5.9
Engineering, surveying	4	11.8	4	11.8
Health	4	11.8	2	5.9
Law, legal studies	2	5.9	1	2.9
Medicine	0	0.0	0	0.0
Science	2	5.9	2	5.9
Veterinary science	1	2.9	0	0.0
I don’t know	5	14.7	7	20.6
I don’t plan on going to university	3	8.8	6	17.6
Other	0	0.0	3	8.8
Total	**34**	**100.0**	**34**	**100.0**

University and TAFE comparisons

While fewer students indicated a desire for university in October, they also showed less interest in going to TAFE. Approximately three times as many students indicated that they would not consider TAFE in the second sitting of the survey than in the first. Slightly fewer said they would; 25% less said they didn't know. These data suggest that students have a greater sense of their preferred post-school education (although almost half still did not know) and that this preference is not for TAFE. When compared with the data above which shows that a smaller number and proportion wanted to attain a university degree in the future than in the first sitting, it becomes clear that fewer students expressed an aspiration for both university *and* TAFE in the second survey sitting. See Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6: Would you consider going to TAFE instead of university? Comparison of April and October



Of the students who indicated in April that they would *not* consider going to TAFE instead of university, half believed university to be superior ("You learn more at university", "Universities give you more subject choices") while the other half indicated that they thought university was more suitable for them ("TAFE doesn't have what I want to study"). See Table 5.26.

Table 5.26: Reasons for considering TAFE – April*

Agree or strongly agree	Would NOT consider TAFE		Would consider TAFE		Don't Know	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I don't know what TAFE is	0	0.0	2	28.6	5	25.0
University and TAFE are the same	0	0.0	3	33.3	1	5.0
You learn more at university	3	75.0	3	33.3	5	25.0
TAFE is more practical	0	0.0	3	33.3	3	15.8
I plan to go to TAFE instead of university because TAFE is closer to my home	0	0.0	1	11.1	1	5.9
Universities give you more subject choices	3	75.0	4	44.4	8	42.1
TAFE doesn't have what I want to study	3	75.0	1	11.1	2	11.8

**Excluding N/A*

By the October (Table 5.27) sitting, students' responses seemed to be more diffuse with a greater distribution across all the reasons offered by the survey. The students appear to be

less certain about the differences between university and TAFE and their reasons for selecting one over the other. Whereas in April, responses from those who would not consider TAFE, for example, appear more decisive and certain (with only a small number of reasons receiving clear support or agreement), the October data show a wider spread across the various responses.

Table 5.27: Reasons for considering TAFE – October*

Agree or strongly agree	Would NOT consider TAFE		Would consider TAFE		Don't Know	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I don't know what TAFE is	3	30.0	0	0.0	7	53.9
University and TAFE are the same	2	18.2	1	14.3	2	16.7
You learn more at university	6	54.5	3	42.9	5	41.7
TAFE is more practical	4	36.4	2	28.6	5	41.7
I plan to go to TAFE instead of university because TAFE is closer to my home	1	10.0	0	0.0	1	8.3
Universities give you more subject choices	6	60.0	3	42.9	7	58.3
TAFE doesn't have what I want to study	6	60.0	0	0.0	1	10.0

**Excluding N/A*

A consideration of how individual students altered their responses between April and October follows:

While almost half (44.1%) of students in the April sitting indicated that they would seek information about post-school options from their teachers or their school, this figure dropped to less than a quarter (23.5%) in October. This may indicate a level of disengagement with the school and the programs and partnerships it offers. However, it could also be indicative of students' greater knowledge of their future options and greater confidence in seeking this information themselves from their peers, the Internet and other sources. But when taken together with other comparative data – i.e. fewer students seeking information from universities or TAFEs and five times more students indicating that they did not know where to find information – the overall impression is that students are less certain of where to find relevant information to inform their choices for post-school education and employment (see Table 5.28 and Figure 5.7).

Table 5.28: Sources of information, by sitting

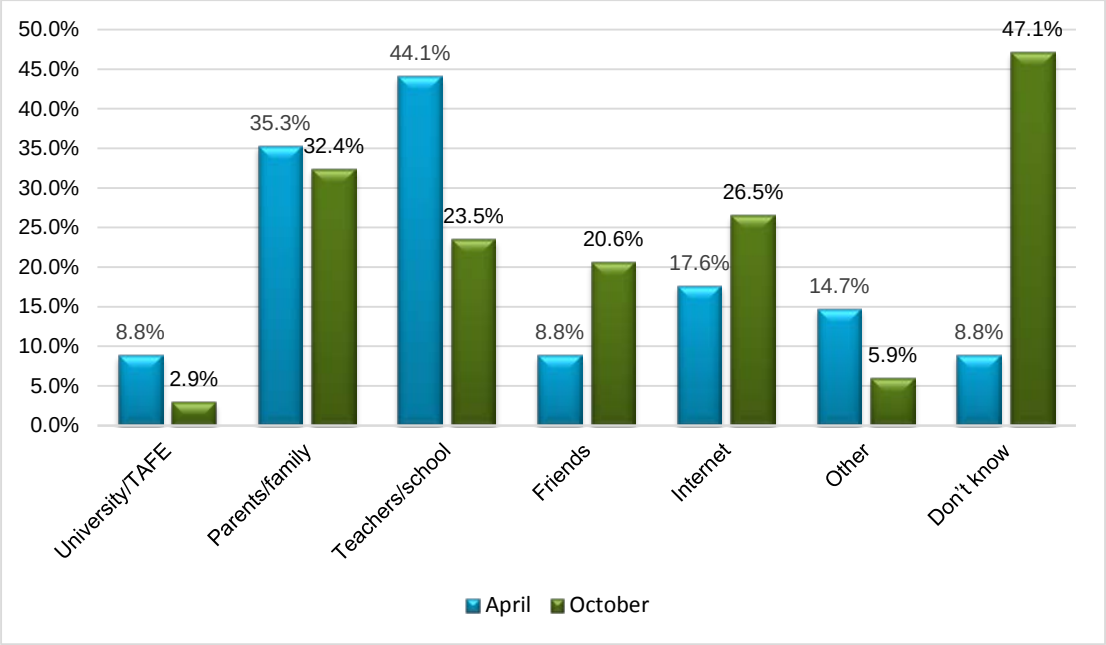
	April		October	
	N	%*	N	%
University/TAFE	3	8.8	1	2.9
Parents/family	12	35.3	11	32.4
Teachers/school	15	44.1	8	23.5
Friends	3	8.8	7	20.6
Internet	6	17.6	9	26.5
Other	5	14.7	2	5.9
Don't know	3	8.8	16	47.1

**% totals more than 100 as students could select more than one response*

The results of the second sitting also demonstrate a shift away from sourcing information from formal or established relationships towards sourcing information from more informal, and potentially less reliable, networks. Increases in the use of the Internet (17.6%-26.5%) and friends (8.8%-20.6%) corresponded with a drop in the number of students seeking information from schools and from universities or TAFEs. Again, these findings are important in the context of a region where participation and completion of tertiary education is low. In seeking different sources of information in the second sitting, students may be recognising their access to resources that will help them navigate towards higher education is limited. The

increase in ‘don’t know’ responses may also be a reflection of confusion as to how to access helpful resources.

Figure 5.7: Sources of information, by sitting



By seeking alternative sources of information, and shifting away from family and schools, these students might be indicating their ability to navigate towards higher education. However, the possible alternatives are not always clearly explained. For example, some students identified the Internet as a resource. However, they were unable to identify specific Internet sources that might assist them. One student in the second sitting displayed a sense of confusion about what might represent a “good” source by explaining they would “probably” get their information from “Internet sites, yahoo answers.” Similar responses citing Google as a resource indicate that students might find it difficult to filter and sort between different types of information (i.e. useful, deceptive or irrelevant).

Parents/guardians and teachers

In the first sitting, 82.3% of all students said their parents’ or guardians’ views were important or extremely important to them when planning their future. Only 17.6% were neutral about their parents’ views or did not regard them as important. By the second sitting, the percentage of students who said their parents’ or guardians’ views were important or extremely important had reduced to 67.6%. In contrast, 26.4% had altered their position to a point where they were neutral about their parents’ views or did not regard them as important. Only 20 respondents did not change the level of parental encouragement between the first and second testing session. For 6 respondents the level of encouragement decreased and for 8 respondents the level of encouragement increased.

When asked how important the views of teachers were to planning their future, 76.5% of all respondents said it was important or extremely important. Only 22.5% were neutral about their teachers’ views or did not regard them as important. By the second sitting, the percentage of students who said their teachers’ views were important or extremely important

had reduced to 47.1%. In contrast, 44.1% had altered their position to a point where they were neutral about their teachers' views or did not regard them as important (see Table 5.30).

Table 5.29: Importance of parents/guardians views – by sitting

	April		October	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Extremely important	6	17.6	10	29.4
Important	22	64.7	13	38.2
Neither important nor unimportant	5	14.7	8	23.5
Unimportant	1	2.9	1	2.9
Definitely not important	0	0	2	5.9
Total	**34**	**100.0**	**34**	**100.0**

Table 5.30: Importance of teachers' views – by sitting

	April		October	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Extremely important	2	5.9	5	14.7
Important	24	70.6	11	32.4
Neither important nor unimportant	7	20.6	12	35.3
Unimportant	1	2.9	5	8.8
Definitely not important	0	0.0	5	8.8
Total	**34**	**100.0**	**34**	**100.0**

While there was a reduction in the importance of both parent and teacher views in planning their future, students continued to place greater importance on the views of their informal relationships rather than the formal relationship with their teachers. This is interesting when placed in the context of the region and parental participation in higher education, as teachers may often be one of the few resources that have experience with university education that are available to students. The reduction in the importance of teachers' views is possibly a missed opportunity for students who aspire to university and represent a potential issue in the navigation capacity of these students.

Finally, students reported a drop in support from others in their family for going to university (Table 5.31). While in April two-thirds of students responded that a family member thought that they should go to university, by October this had dropped to just over half. There was a similar increase in the number of students who did not know, and one student indicated that there was no one in their family who thought attending university was a idea (up from zero in April). The data here support the link between students' views of higher education and that of their families.

Table 5.31: Does anyone in your family think it would be good for you to go to university – by sitting

	April		October	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Yes	23	67.6	18	54.5
No	0	0.0	1	3.0
Don't know	11	32.4	14	42.4
Total	**34**	**100.0**	**33**	**100.0**

6| Conclusions

The main conclusion that emerges from this study is that while there is apparent aspiration for higher education among NBC students, this declined over the six months between the two sittings of the survey. Similarly, interest in vocational education waned over the period, with students articulating desires for less prestigious occupations. Another conclusion is that many of the students have limited access to resources and experiences with post-secondary education options, particularly universities. Most students indicated that they rely on their friends and parents for information in this regard, but very few students have parents with university qualifications or know other people with experience with university. Thus, their navigational capacities of students remain under-resourced.

In expanding on this conclusion, this Chapter is organised in three sections. The first provides an insight into the implementation of the survey and identifies where improvements could be made for future research. The second briefly lists select findings from the survey that draw attention to these issues and discusses them in light of key theories drawn from the project's conceptual framework. The final section provides concluding remarks on the findings of the survey.

6.1 *The survey*

The research design entailed students participating in the survey on two occasions. This proved to be problematic for a number of reasons:

- Feedback from the second sitting of the survey indicated reduced interest among students in participating in the survey. Students felt they had 'just done it' and were reluctant to complete it again. Evidently, the six-month period between sittings was not long enough to maintain student interest and engagement. Ideally, the timing of the first and second sittings in the future should be altered to at least 12 months apart (although this is limited by project funding as well as other logistical issues at the school level).
- This attrition from first to second sitting resulted in much less available data, restricting the depth of analysis and conclusions that could be drawn.
- As noted in Chapter 4, the April sitting was completed on a campus of Deakin University with the assistance of GDAL (Graduate Diploma of Education – Applied Learning) students. This resulted in robust and complete data from all who participated. By contrast, the October sitting was differently administered (for reasons described earlier), which reduced the quantity and quality of data.
- The length of the survey was also an issue. TASSA was initially developed as a way of surveying students on the range of underlying concepts described in Chapter 3. Not all of these questions needed to be answered a second time – e.g. demographic questions could have been excluded – and some theoretical constructs were of greater relevance than others to this particular project.
- Providing small incentives – such as iTunes vouchers – may assist with greater participation and engagement with the survey in the future. Unfortunately, the project budget did not allow for these incentives on this occasion.

6.2 *Data*

Chapter 5 and the Appendices provide a full account of findings from the survey data. The following select findings drawn from Chapter 5 reveal issues that influence aspirations for Northern Bay College students who completed the survey. In brief:

- The number of respondents is small and caution should therefore be exercised in drawing conclusions from the data. For example, the data should be read as representative of this particular student cohort rather than of all similar students.

- *Many students aspire to go to university*: In the first sitting of the survey, over two-thirds of students (70.4% or 50 students) indicated an aspiration to attend university. More female students (75%) expressed this desire than their male peers (64.5%).

- *Limited family resources available to assist in navigation towards university*: Although there is some variation in the data between April and October, it is clear that only a small proportion of students have access to family experiences in higher education. In the broader responses in the first sitting, a small proportion of students' parents had a university education (4.2% of mothers and 1.4% of fathers). In the comparative group less than 3% of students have parents with a university degree. Similarly, few students had siblings who have studied at university. This lack of experience with university is consistent with the general population in the Corio / Greater Geelong region (see Chapter 2). Despite this, when students were asked who or where they would source information about post-school options, most students indicated that they would turn to their friends and families. This is an important finding when contextualised with the limited experiences of family members.

- *Deakin is the preferred university for Northern Bay College students*: When asked what university they would like to go to, 52% of students indicated a preference to attend Deakin University. This is understandable given Northern Bay College's relationship with Deakin, and that the first sitting of the survey was undertaken at Deakin's Waurn Ponds campus, the only university with a campus in the Geelong region. Only three of Victoria's nine universities were selected by students (Deakin, Melbourne and Ballarat universities) despite the survey presenting all Victorian-based universities as options. While many respondents have plans to go to university, they have yet to decide on their preferred university.

Comparisons between the two sittings of the survey (based on the 34 students who participated in both sittings) indicate that:

- *Many students aspire to go to university, but this desire reduced over time*: By the second sitting (October), fewer students retained a desire to attend university – 62.5% (58.8% if including N/A responses) as opposed to 67.6% of this particular group of students in the first sitting. (NB: As indicated above, 70.4% of all students in the first sitting expressed a desire to attend university in the future.)

- *Overall, desire for post-secondary education was reduced:* Similar to university aspirations, there was an increase in the number of students who indicated that they would *not* consider TAFE instead of university (11.8% April rising to 33.3% in October). Combined with the reduced aspiration for HE, these data indicate that interest in pursuing *any* form of post-secondary education waned between April and October.

- *Fewer students aspired to attend Deakin University*: By the second sitting there was a 50% reduction in the number of students who selected Deakin University as their preferred institution (from 18 to 9). There was also an increase in the number of students who were unsure of what university they would like to attend or had decided that university was not a pathway they wished to pursue.
- *Fewer students anticipated having a university qualification than aspired to one*: For some students, particularly males, there was a divergence between what they desired and what they thought was possible. In the first sitting of the survey, slightly fewer students anticipated having a degree (59%) than those who aspired to having one (68%). By the second sitting of the survey, this slight difference continued with fewer students anticipating having a degree (53%) than those who aspired to having one (63%).
- *Less belief that university would help them achieve their aspirations for the future*: In April, 88.2% thought that there was some chance or better of university helping them to achieve their future. By October, this was 66.7%, while 24.2% thought there was little to no chance that university would help (compared with only 8.8% in April).
- *Continued confusion over qualifications required to achieve their aspirations*: While there was a greater alignment between perceived and required qualification levels in the second sitting, there was a continued inflated view of the education required for occupations. However, there was a gender difference in the perception of what qualifications were required, with male students tending to over-estimate the required qualifications and female students under-estimating the necessary qualifications.
- *A preference for less prestigious occupations*: Overall students in the October sitting tended to select as their first preference occupations with lower prestige scores than in the April sitting.
- *Adaptive preferences in taste and aspirations for educational futures*: The reduced desire to attend both university and TAFE might be explained by the concept of 'adaptive' preferences (Elster 1983). This may be a reflection of students' changing desires for their future – a future in which post-secondary education is not required. These preferences could be adapted as a result of any number of changes in their social, cultural or educational environment that alter a student's perception of what is desirable and possible.

6.3 *Conclusion*

Overall, there was a general reduction in the post-secondary aspirations of students over the course of the research. While aspirations for university were present in both surveys, students displayed reduced aspirations for both university and VET by the second sitting. While this could be indicative of the general disinterest represented by fewer students participating in the second survey, the reduced interest in post-secondary education was also present in a number of areas of the survey. For example, students' selection of occupations of lower prestige in the second sitting indicates reduced aspiration to pursue pathways that require university degrees.

In retrospect, the higher level of student aspiration for university in the first sitting (70.4%) could be read as an expression of doxic aspirations (Zipin et al. 2013). In other words, the aspiration to attend university is one that they think they *should* desire rather than one that

they actually aspire to. Similarly, this might also demonstrate the influence of taste on student judgments of the future where students recognise the potential prestige that higher education can afford. However, with the reduced levels of aspiration in the second sitting, this raises some doubts about the results of other research (e.g. Bowen & Doughney, 2010; James, 2002) that finds similar high rates of aspiration.

One possible explanation for the reduced aspirations or general disinterest in post-secondary education rests in students' access to information or confused interpretations of the resources available to them. Confusion was expressed in a number of different ways. One of the most notable was in the number of students who assumed they will need a university degree for a desired occupation for which one is not required. More importantly is the confusion that might be arising from the lack of access to information. While students are the focus of much attention from a number of external parties encouraging them to pursue a wide variety of post-secondary options, students continue to rely on family and friends as the primary source of information in thinking about their futures. This reliance increased by the second sitting. It is possible that the lack of resources or the potential misinformation that may come from these sources has the potential to reinforce student disinterest towards university.

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Appendix 1 | The Australian Survey of Student Aspirations[13]

Part 1

This survey is about your ideas and hopes for the future. It has been created by researchers at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia and is being implemented in conjunction with CQUniversity. We want to learn about how people like you think about your future. We also want to learn about what guides your thinking. Thank you for completing this survey, which will help us learn about these things. The survey will take approximately 30-60 minutes to complete.

Before you get started: I have discussed completing this survey with my parent/guardian and they are happy for me to participate. *Yes / No*

Do you also agree to answer questions in this survey? *Yes / No*

The answers you give us are private. We will get your answers but we will not know that they came from you. No one else will know what answers you have given us either. In our office at the University, we will join everyone's answers together. Your answers will be just one of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of answers but without your name. To help us check whether you do this survey again sometime in the future, we will give you a code that only you and we know. It tells us a little bit about you but not enough for us to know who you are exactly. Please use this same code if you do this survey again sometime in the future.

This is the code: Please write the first 4 letters of your last or family name here: (For example, if your last or family name is SMITH you would write SMIT but if your last or family name is SLY you would write SLY).

Please write the day and month you were born (Please use 4 numbers. For example, 5th March would be 0503).

What is your age?

Are you male or female?

What school do you go to?

What Year are you in?

What is the name of the street you live in? (Please do NOT write the number of your house or unit, but please include street type details – e.g. Street, Avenue, Road, Parade, etc.)

What is the postcode for the area you live in? (Ask your teacher if you are not sure.)

Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

What country were you born in?

If 'Overseas' which country were you born in?

Is English the main language spoken in your home?

If not English, what is the main language spoken in your home?

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Part 2

The next questions are about your parents. Try to answer these as best you can but if you don't know the answer, choose "Don't know".

What country was your MOTHER born in?

If 'Overseas' which country was it? If you aren't sure, write "don't know".

What country was your FATHER born in?

If 'Overseas' which country was it? If you aren't sure, write "don't know".

Did you or your parents come to Australia as refugees?

If yes, what year did you/they arrive in Australia? If you aren't sure, write "don't know".

Part 3

Here are some more questions about your parents or your guardians (the person or people who are responsible for looking after you). Try to answer these as best you can but if you don't know the answer, choose "Don't know".

For your MOTHER or FEMALE guardian, what is the title of her main job? (For example, lawyer, aircraft maintenance engineer, cleaner, not in paid work, etc.) If you aren't sure, write "don't know".

What is HER HIGHEST education qualification or level? *Did not attend school; Completed primary school; Some secondary school; Completed secondary school (Year 12); Vocational certificate; Vocational diploma or associate diploma; University degree; University postgraduate degree; Don't know.*

For your FATHER or MALE guardian, what is the title of his main job? (For example, lawyer, aircraft maintenance engineer, cleaner, not in paid work, etc.) If you aren't sure, write "don't know".

What is HIS HIGHEST education qualification or level? *Did not attend school; Completed primary school; Some secondary school; Completed secondary school (Year 12); Vocational certificate; Vocational diploma or associate diploma; University degree; University postgraduate degree; Don't know.*

Part 4

The next questions are where the main survey starts. The questions ask you to 'think about' the present, and they ask 'what you want' and 'what you think will happen' in the future. Try to give an answer for every question. Write 'don't know' if you don't know or don't have an answer. These questions are about what you WILL DO or what you would LIKE TO DO in the future.

If you could only choose from the following occupations in the future, what would you choose? Move your cursor over the job titles to see their order number. Click and drag to reorder them from 1 (most desirable) to 10 (least desirable): *Aircraft maintenance engineer; Cleaner; Data processing operator; Dental technician; Information technology (IT) support technician; Lawyer; Medical doctor; Social worker; Storeperson; TAFE teacher.*

Apart from the fact that these were the only options we gave you, why did you select your first preference? Please select all that apply. *Because I like to help people; Because it is the one I would enjoy the most; Because it is an easy job; Because it is a well-paid job; Because it is an exciting job; Because I want to be successful in life; Other, please specify.*

If you were to get to do your first preference, what things between now and then would you need to do? What would need to happen along the way? How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? If a statement doesn't apply, please click N/A. *I would need to get good results at school; I would need to choose the right subjects at school; I would need to study hard; I would need to finish secondary school; I would need to go to TAFE; I would need to go to university; I would need to move to another city; Other, please specify.*

If you could choose to do ANY occupation you like in the future, what would it be?

Why do you want to do this? Please select all that apply. *I don't know; Because it is a well-paid job; Because I think I am capable of doing it; Because I think this job would make me happy; Other, please specify.*

How confident are you that you will get this kind of job? *Very confident; Confident; Undecided; Not very confident; Definitely not confident.*

If you can't do what you really want to do, what do you think you will end up doing? Why?

What occupation do you think your PARENTS or GUARDIANS or FAMILY would like you to do in the future? If you don't know or don't have an answer, write "don't know".

Why do you think they would like you to do this? Please select as many as apply. *I don't know. I haven't discussed it with them; Because it is a well-paid job; Because they think I am capable of doing it; Because they think this job would make me happy; Other, please specify.*

What occupation do you think your TEACHERS and SCHOOL think you WILL DO in the future?

Why do you think they think this? Please select as many as apply. *I don't know. I haven't discussed it with them; Because it is a well-paid job; Because they think I am capable of doing it; Because they think this job would make me happy; Other, please specify.*

How much encouragement do your PARENTS give you to do well at school? *A great deal of encouragement; A fair bit of encouragement; Some encouragement; Not much encouragement; No encouragement at all.*

How much encouragement do your TEACHERS and SCHOOL give you to do well at school? *A great deal of encouragement; A fair bit of encouragement; Some encouragement; Not much encouragement; No encouragement at all.*

Think about the things you like to do.

What is your favourite thing about school? Please select as many as apply. *Teachers; Being with friends; Learning and doing new things; Being indoors; Doing homework; Fun subjects, please specify; Other, please specify.*

What is your LEAST favourite thing about school? Please select as many as apply. *Teachers; People who tease me; Learning and doing new things; Being indoors; Doing homework; Boring subjects, please specify; Other, please specify.*

What do you spend most of your time doing when you are NOT at school? Please select as many as apply. *Spending time with my family; Spending time with my friends; Doing chores; Looking after my brother(s) and sister(s); Playing sport; On the computer or the internet; Watching television; Reading; Doing homework; Doing paid work, please specify kind of work; Other, please specify.*

Dreaming big, is there something that you have not yet done but would like to do one day? If so, what is it?

Part 5

These questions are about the things you WILL HAVE or would LIKE TO HAVE in the future. Click N/A if a statement doesn't apply to you.

In the future, when you are the same age as your parents or guardians are now, what would you LIKE TO have or own? How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? If a statement doesn't apply, please click N/A. *I don't want to have very much; A big house, a nice car, and a good job; A university degree; My own business; A family (children) of my own; Other, please specify.*

Why are these important to you? Please select all that apply. I need these things to secure my future; These things will help me to be happy; Don't know; Other, please specify.

What do you think you WILL have? How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? If a statement doesn't apply, please click N/A. *I don't think I will have very much; A big house, a nice car, and a good job; A university degree; My own business; A family (children) of my own; Other, please specify.*

What would YOU do to make this happen? Please select as many as apply. *Work hard at school; Go to university; Get a good job; Save my money; Go to TAFE; Don't know; Other, please specify.*

What would OTHERS do to make this happen? Please select as many as apply. *Be supportive, encourage me; Give me good advice; Give or lend me the money I need; Don't know; Other, please specify.*

What things do you think your PARENTS would LIKE you to have in the future? How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? If a statement doesn't apply, please click N/A. *I don't know. I haven't discussed my future with them; A happy life; A successful life; A good education; A family of my own; A good job; Other, please specify.*

What things do you think your TEACHERS and SCHOOL would LIKE you to have in the future? How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? If a statement doesn't apply, please click N/A. *I don't know. I haven't discussed my future with them; A happy life; A successful life; A good education; A family of my own; A good job; Other, please specify.*

In the future, when you are the same age as your parents or guardians are now, where would you like to live? Describe the kind of location and the kind of house or unit. Write 'don't know' if you don't know or don't have an answer.

Think about your ideas for the future, what you want to do, to have and to be.

If you wanted to find out information about what to do after leaving school, where and who would you get that information from?

What makes you trust the advice about the future from some people more than others? How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? If a statement doesn't apply, please click N/A. *I trust people who I know well; I trust people who have experience of these kinds of things; I trust people who are in positions of authority; I trust people who have qualifications in these kind of things; Other, please specify.*

How important are your PARENTS' or GUARDIANS' views in planning your future? *Extremely Important; Important; Neither Important nor unimportant; Unimportant; Definitely not important.*

How important are your TEACHERS' views in planning your future? *Extremely Important; Important; Neither Important nor unimportant; Unimportant; Definitely not important.*

Will going to university help your ideas about the future come true? *Very good chance; Some chance; Equal chance; Very little chance; No chance.* Why? Why not?

Have you ever been to visit a university? *Yes; No; Don't know.*

Has your brother or sister done a course at university? *Yes; No; Don't know.*

Do you know anyone else who has done a course at university? *Yes; No; Don't know.*

What other experiences have you had with universities?

Does anyone in your family think it would be good for you to go to university? *Yes; No; Don't know.*

If yes or no, why do they think this?

If you go to university, which university would you like to go to? *Australian Catholic University; Deakin University; La Trobe University; Monash University; RMIT University; Swinburne University of Technology; University of Ballarat; University of Melbourne; Victoria University; I don't know; I don't plan on going to university; Other, please specify.*

If you go to university, what would you like to study? *Agriculture, animal husbandry; Architecture, building; Arts, humanities and social sciences; Business, administration, economics; Creative arts and music; Education; Engineering, surveying; Health; Law, legal studies; Medicine; Science; Veterinary science; I don't know; I don't plan on going to university; Other, please specify.*

Would you consider going to TAFE instead of university? *Yes; No; Don't know.*

Why? Why not? How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? If a statement doesn't apply, please click N/A. *I don't know what TAFE is; University and TAFE are the same; You learn more at university; TAFE is more practical; I plan to go to TAFE instead of university because TAFE is closer to my home; Universities give you more subject choices; TAFE doesn't have what I want to study; Other, please specify.*

Part 6

These questions are about the person you WILL BE or would LIKE TO BE in the future.

How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you? What kind of person are you?

What kind of activity would you like to do to celebrate a special occasion? How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? If a statement doesn't apply, please click N/A. *Go out to dinner at a restaurant; Hold a party at my house; Go out to a theme park; Other, please specify.*

What kind of clothes would you wear to a special occasion? Please be as specific as you can (e.g. style of clothes).

What kind of food and drink would you like to have on special occasions? Please be as specific as you can.

Part 7

These are the final questions in the survey. Thank you for your patience! Think about a time when you wanted to do something that needed a lot of planning.

What did you do that required planning and why?

What did you have to think about and do, to make it happen? How much do you agree or disagree with each statement? If a statement doesn't apply, please click N/A. *I don't do much planning; The layout and design; What I would say and what I would wear; The order of activities, when they would happen and where; Who I would invite and what we would do; Other, please specify.*

Did you get any help from anyone? If so, from whom?

When you are successful at making things happen, why do you think you are successful? Please select as many as apply. *Because people help me; Because I am a good leader; Because I have done something similar before; Because I never give up; Other, please specify.*

When you are NOT successful at making things happen, why do you think you are NOT successful? Please select as many as apply. *Because I don't get any help; Because other people don't want to do it; Because it is the first time I have done it; Because I didn't try hard enough; Other, please specify.*

How often do you do things like this that need lots of planning? *Once a week; Once every month; Every three months; Every six months; Never; Other, please specify.*

Appendix 2 | List of abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
AUSIE06	Australian Socioeconomic Index 2006
GDAL	Graduate Diploma of Education (Applied Learning)
NBC	Northern Bay College
SES	Socioeconomic Status
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Appendix 3 | Plans for progressing to future occupation

In regard to their aspirations, students were asked 'If you were to get to do your first preference [of occupation], what would you need to do?' Students could select as many of the following responses as they wished:

- I would need to get good results at school
- I would need to choose the right subjects at school
- I would need to study hard
- I would need to finish secondary school
- I would need to go to TAFE
- I would need to go to university
- I would need to move to another city
- Other, please specify.

The following data compare student responses in the April and October survey sittings:

Table A3.1: Get good results at school

Get good results at school	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	23	67.6	20	58.8
Agree	11	32.4	9	26.5
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0.0	4	11.8
Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	1	2.9
Total	34	100.0	34	100.0

Table A3.2: I would need to choose the right subjects at school

Get good results at school	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	20	58.8	21	61.8
Agree	13	38.2	12	35.3
Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	2.9	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	1	2.9
Total	34	100.0	34	100.0

Table A3.3: I would need to study hard

Get good results at school	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	22	64.7	19	57.6
Agree	11	32.4	11	33.3
Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	2.9	2	6.1
Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	1	3.0
Total	34	100.0	33	100.0

Table A3.4: I would need to finish secondary school

Get good results at school	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	24	70.6	23	67.6
Agree	7	20.6	8	23.5
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	8.8	1	2.9
Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	2	5.9
Total	34	100.0	34	100.0

Table A3.5: I would need to go to TAFE

Get good results at school	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	6	19.4	6	22.2
Agree	13	41.9	7	25.9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	11	35.5	10	37.0
Disagree	1	3.2	3	11.1
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	1	3.7
Total	31	100.0	27	100.0

Table A3.6: I would need to go to university

Get good results at school	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	12	35.3	11	34.4
Agree	11	32.4	3	9.4
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9	26.5	13	40.6
Disagree	2	5.9	1	3.1
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	4	12.5
Total	34	100.0	32	100.0

Table A3.7: I would need to move to another city

Get good results at school	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	2	6.9	4	12.9
Agree	3	10.3	7	22.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	14	48.3	10	32.3
Disagree	6	20.7	5	16.1
Strongly Disagree	4	13.8	5	16.1
Total	29	100.0	31	100.0

Table A3.8: Going to university will help future

Going to university will help future come true	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Very good chance	15	44.1	12	36.4
Some chance	15	44.1	10	30.3
Equal chance	1	2.9	3	9.1
Very little chance	3	8.8	4	12.1
No chance	0	0.0	4	12.1
Total	34	100.0	33	100.0

Table A3.9: Parents/guardians views

Parents/guardians views about your future	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Extremely important	6	17.6	10	29.4
Important	22	64.7	13	38.2
Neither important nor unimportant	5	14.7	8	23.5
Unimportant	1	2.9	1	2.9
Definitely not important	0	0.0	2	5.9
Total	34	100.0	34	100.0

Table A3.10: Teachers views

Parents/guardians views about your future	April		October	
	N	%	N	%
Extremely important	2	5.9	5	14.7
Important	24	70.6	11	32.4
Neither important nor unimportant	7	20.6	12	35.3
Unimportant	1	2.9	3	8.8
Definitely not important	0	0.0	3	8.8
Total	34	100.0	34	100.0

The list of occupations in the restricted choice question represents a spread of skill levels and prerequisite qualifications. These range from compulsory secondary school required for cleaners, up to bachelor degree or higher for people working in the medical and legal professions. This is illustrated in Table A3.11.

Table A3.11: Occupation qualification requirements – Sitting 1

Occupation	ANZSCO Skill level	Required Qualifications
Aircraft maintenance engineer	3	Cert III / IV
Cleaner	5	Compulsory Secondary / Cert I
Data processing operator	4	Cert II / III
Dental technician	2	Associate Degree, Advanced Diploma or Diploma
Information technology (IT) support technician	2	Associate Degree, Advanced Diploma or Diploma
Lawyer	1	Bachelor Degree or higher qualification
Medical doctor (GP)	1	Bachelor Degree or higher qualification
Social worker	1	Bachelor Degree or higher qualification
Storeperson	4	Cert II / III
TAFE Teacher (Vocational Education Teacher)	1	Bachelor Degree or higher qualification

Source: Trewin & Pink (2006).

These skill and qualification requirements were then matched against the proportion of students who selected each occupational option. As Table A3.12 indicates, 50.7% of respondents selected as their first preference one of the four occupations in the list requiring a university degree. Similarly, 47.9% selected occupations that need TAFE qualifications. However, when asked what they thought they needed to do to achieve this occupation preference, a greater proportion of students indicated that they needed to go to university or go to TAFE (see Chapter 5, Table 5.5).

Table A3.12: Highest selected occupation and qualification requirements – Sitting 1

Highest Selected Occupation	M	F	Total N	Total %	Requires uni	Requires TAFE	Requires Neither
Medical doctor	0	7	**7**	**9.9**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
Lawyer	2	7	**9**	**12.7**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
TAFE Teacher	1	4	**5**	**7.0**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
Social worker	2	13	**15**	**21.1**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
Information technology support technician	5	3	**8**	**11.3**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Dental technician	0	1	**1**	**1.4**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Aircraft maintenance engineer	16	1	**17**	**23.9**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Data processing operator	2	1	**3**	**4.2**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Storeperson	3	2	**5**	**7.0**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Cleaner	0	1	**1**	**1.4**	**No**	**No**	**Yes**
Total	**31**	**40**	**71**	**100.0**	**36**	**35**	**1**
					50.7%	**47.9%**	**1.4%**

Table A3.12: Highest selected occupation and qualification requirements – April

Highest Selected Occupation	M	F	Total N	Total %	Requires uni	Requires TAFE	Requires Neither
Medical doctor	0	3	**3**	**8.8**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
Lawyer	1	4	**5**	**14.7**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
TAFE Teacher	0	2	**2**	**5.9**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
Social worker	2	7	**9**	**26.5**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
Information technology support technician	2	3	**5**	**14.7**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Dental technician	0	0	**0**	**0.0**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Aircraft maintenance engineer	8	0	**8**	**23.5**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Data processing operator	1	0	**1**	**2.9**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Storeperson	0	1	**1**	**2.9**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Cleaner	0	0	**0**	**0.0**	**No**	**No**	**Yes**
Total	**14**	**20**	**34**	**100.0**	**19**	**15**	**0**
					55.9%	**44.1%**	**0.0%**

Table A3.13: Highest selected occupation and qualification requirements – October

Highest Selected Occupation	M	F	Total N	Total %	Requires uni	Requires TAFE	Requires Neither
Medical doctor	0	1	**1**	**2.9**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
Lawyer	2	4	**6**	**17.6**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
TAFE Teacher	0	0	**0**	**0.0**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
Social worker	0	7	**7**	**20.6**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
Information technology support technician	2	4	**6**	**17.6**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Dental technician	0	1	**1**	**2.9**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Aircraft maintenance engineer	8	1	**9**	**26.5**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Data processing operator	0	0	**0**	**0.0**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Storeperson	2	1	**3**	**8.8**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Cleaner	0	1	**1**	**2.9**	**No**	**No**	**Yes**
Total	**14**	**20**	**34**	**100.0**	**14**	**19**	**1**
					41.2%	**55.9%**	**2.9%**